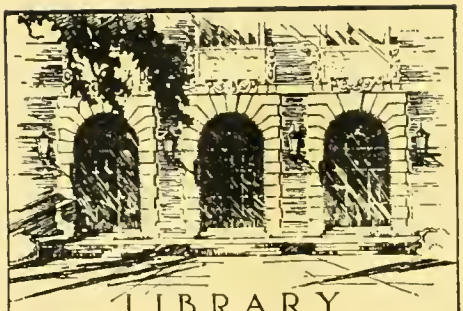

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THE WILD GAZELLE

AND OTHER TALES.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

C. F. ARMSTRONG,

AUTHOR OF

"The Two Midshipmen," "The Lily of Devon," "Our Blue Jackets," &c.

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THE WILD GAZELLE.

CHAPTER I.

In the month of January, in the year ——, one of those beautiful and graceful specimens of art and nautical skill, an English schooner yacht, might have been seen pursuing its course for the Harbour of Genoa. Out of the harbour was blowing a strong breeze of *tramontane*, or north wind. It was, nevertheless, a very fine and clear day for the time of year; the sky was bright and unclouded, and the breeze was more bracing than cold.

So fine, indeed, was the day, that it tempted the fair daughters of Genoa, with their attend-

ant *cavaleros* to walk the ramparts that encircle that magnificent harbour. The gardens of the Doria Palace, overlooking the sparkling waters of the harbour, were also filled with gay promenaders.

The schooner yacht was sailing swiftly within a couple of miles of San Pietro D'Orsina, a suburb of palaces. She was under full sail, and as she rounded the gigantic Pharo of Genoa, whose first stone was laid three hundred years ago, she tacked, and stood across the noble harbour, in order to gain the anchorage off the Arsenal. The beauty of her build, the rapidity with which she tacked and gathered way, her snow white canvas, and her long, low, graceful, black hull attracted at once the attention, not only of the promenaders, but also the admiration of the different ships she passed in her rapid passage across the harbour.

Though she was rather over two hundred and fifty tons burden, her light and apparently fragile construction, her tapering, rod-

like spars and yards, caused the casual observer to exclaim, "How is it possible for that beautiful toy to contend with the blasts of winter and fierce waves of the ocean? Fitter surely for the quiet lake than the stormy seas of the vast Atlantic."

This graceful, swift-gliding craft, however, scarcely disturbing the mimic waves she separated in her course, had traversed the Atlantic in its fiercest mood; had braved, with impunity, the wild and stormy waves of the Black Sea; had seen ships, grand in their magnitude, and powerful in their construction, yield to the tempest, while the light and graceful yacht braved and survived it.

Her strength lay in her perfect symmetry, which deceived the unpractised eye. But to the keen eye of the sailor, who saw in her breadth of beam, her clean and beautiful run aft, her elongated bow and exquisitely-proportioned spars, a splendid specimen of a noble sea-going boat, and such the "Wild Gazelle" was well-known to be.

Walking the deck of the schooner, with a telescope in his hand, was a remarkably fine young man, of some eight or nine and twenty years of age—Commander Percy Devereux, of the Royal Navy, who was the owner of the "Wild Gazelle." Left an orphan at a tender age, he was confided to the guardianship of his maternal uncle, Lord Tradmore. His father, a captain in the Royal Navy, was killed at Navarino. His last wish was that his son should enter the service at a proper age. Up to the age fit for entering the navy as a midshipman, Percy Devereux received the best education his uncle could procure for him, and finally, he was placed in the "Undaunted" frigate, as a midshipman. Aboard this vessel our hero distinguished himself as much as a high-spirited youngster could in the time of peace.

Having passed his examination with great credit, he was shortly after appointed as Lieutenant to the "Gladiator," the year after the Crimean war commenced, and the blue

jackets of old England were in extacies. But they were doomed to a cruel disappointment. It was not the fortune of the navy to distinguish itself. It was not permitted to do so.

Percy Devereux, like many others, was thoroughly disgusted. He sailed for Sebastopol. He longed to see the noble ships and their eager crews make a dash at those grim defences, and demolish them. But glory was not for the navy of England in that war.

By a piece of good fortune, our hero got appointed to one of the light draught gun-boats, proceeding up the Black Sea and into the Sea of Azoff. Here was something to do, and the blue jackets in the gun-boats did distinguish themselves, and did good service. A brilliant exploit of Lieutenant Devereux gained him promotion, and, just before the close of the war, his uncle's interest and his own gallantry, caused him to be made first lieutenant of the "Medina." On the termination of the war, he returned to England.

Restless and dissatisfied, although his own

career had been exceedingly fortunate, he proceeded, after a short stay ashore, as first lieutenant of the "Racehorse," to the West Indies. This ship, from one cause or another, was unfortunate, and returned to England. Devereux almost immediately joined as first lieutenant of the "Desperate." This ship proceeded into the Pacific. Whilst there, he had the good fortune, at the risk of his life, to save two fine ships from total destruction. One was a Government transport, with four hundred human beings on board, who were all saved through his daring and unremitting energy. On his return to England he was made a Commander.

To his great surprise he learned that he had inherited, from a very distant relation—in fact, one of whom he had scarcely ever heard—a very large fortune. This gentleman, of most eccentric habits and a bachelor, possessed of a fine estate in Dorsetshire, as well as one in Hampshire, which he never visited, residing in London the year round,

and had ate his solitary dinner at the Albany year after year, happened to see an elaborate account of Percy Devereux's saving the two ships exposed to almost certain destruction, and exclaimed,

"He shall be my heir; he is a relative of mine."

Mr. John Digby at once proceeded to his solicitor, and made a fresh will. Mr. Digby was a Roman Catholic convert, and by his previous will had consigned the whole of his property to three Roman Catholic institutions. Three days after making the fresh arrangement he was knocked down by a cab, and so seriously injured that he died in less than a fortnight.

When Commander Devereux returned to England Lord Tradmore imparted to him the certainly pleasing intelligence that he was now the possessor of two fine estates, which, with other property in the funds and sundry bonds, amounted to a clear income of eight thousand pounds a year.

"So now, I think," added his Lordship, "you may, as there are no symptoms of a war with any power, thanks to our exertions" —his Lordship was a peer and a Whig—"you may retire from the service, marry, lead an easy life, and enjoy yourself."

"Well, my Lord," returned our hero, "I will so far take your advice as to retire on half pay, for a war may spring up somewhere; but as to marrying, I must decline that interesting part of your plans. I will build a yacht, and roam for a couple of years over the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, and pay a visit to my beautiful cousin and once playmate, at Genoa. What on earth possessed her to marry an Italian?"

"Well," returned Lord Tradmore, with a smile, "it's all your fault that she married an Italian, and is now a rich widow with two very beautiful children. I visited her last year; she is residing in Genoa. Her husband, the Count Castiglioni, died rather suddenly from disease of the heart, leaving her mis-

tress of of his large possessions. So, Percy, if you have no objection to a young, beautiful, and wealthy widow, you may marry your cousin yet."

"Thank you, my Lord," returned Commander Devereux, with a smile; "but I do not intend devoting my life to a widow, though I feel perfectly satisfied that my fair cousin must be a most fascinating and dangerous one. Why it should be my fault that Laura married an Italian puzzles me."

"Why did you not propose to her yourself, Percy?" asked his Lordship. "You were mighty fond of each other when twelve or thirteen years of age; but you never went to see her on your return from the Crimea, and she told me herself she was satisfied you would never love anything but the sea and your profession. So she went with Lady Forbes to Italy, met the handsome Count Castiglioni at Nice, married him, and in two years became a widow. So, if you are bent on building a yacht and cruising in the

Mediterranean, you can visit the Countess, and very likely you may persuade her to return to her native land as the Countess Devereux"

"In truth," said Percy Devereux, rather seriously, "I was very fond of Laura when a boy, and I shall be most delighted to renew our early intimacy; but beyond friendship I can never get. I am rather romantic; a fair vision is continually floating before my mind's eye, though only seen for a moment, and though I almost feel satisfied I shall never see this vision again in reality, I cling to the delusion, and still hope."

"Humph!" muttered his Lordship, "all stuff and nonsense. I never was romantic; it's all moonshine in real life. Knock about a bit, spend some of your superfluous cash, and depend on it you will lose all your romance and fair visions for tangible realities."

Percy Devereux did knock about, as his *ci-devant* guardian proposed. He mingled in

the gay world, was fêted and sought after, and greatly admired by the softer sex. He gave large entertainments at his mansion in Hampshire, kept hunters and racers, became celebrated as a desperate rider; but in twelve months he became sick of the gay life of fashion, and longed to get back to his old elements. His magnificent yacht was the admiration of all the members of the Royal Yacht Club.

The "Wild Gazelle" carried off the Queen's cup at the Cowes Regatta, and several other cups besides, and then she sailed for the Mediterranean, wafted on her way by the sighs of many a fair maiden, who could not behold the handsome sailor without wishing her own bright eyes had the power of winning him from his ocean love.

Percy Devereux ran through the Mediterranean into the Black Sea, gazed again upon the grand ruins of the fortress of Sebastapol, visited many places in the Sea of Asoff, made numerous inquiries, seemed disappointed

and unsettled. Finally he returned to the Mediterranean, after visiting the Adriatic and the once mighty Queen of the Adriatic, and as we commenced our chapter, the "Wild Gazelle" was on a visit to the once proud rival of Venice—Genoa the Superba.

After this digression we return to the deck of the "Wild Gazelle."

Devereux was well acquainted with Genoa. When a midshipman he had often been in the city, for the frigate he sailed in was a frequent visitor at that noble seaport. Having reached the desired spot, off the Arsenal, the yacht anchored and furled her canvas, and the same evening our hero took up his residence at the Croce de Malta, with only one attendant, a rather favourite servant, of the name of Thomas Phillips. The next day, after making some inquiries, he proceeded to visit his cousin, the Countess Castiglioni.

The Countess, when in Genoa, resided in one of those magnificent palaces that form the noble Stradi de Balbi. She was the centre

of attraction in the society of Genoa, and the noble saloons of her beautiful palace were at stated periods crowded with the very highest of the Italian nobility. The Countess at this period was only eight and twenty. She was tenderly attached to the memory of her husband, and fondly devoted to her children. It was very well known in the society in which she moved in that it was her determination never to marry again.

The Countess was aware that her early playmate and cousin, Percy Devereux, intended visiting Genoa. He wrote to her from Naples a kind and brotherly letter, stating, after a variety of other matters, that he should most probably be in Genoa about the middle of January, so that she was on the look out for him.

It so happened, the weather permitting, that the "Wild Gazelle" entered the harbour of Genoa within a few hours of the time he mentioned in his letter. The long range of balcony, stretching the entire length of the

Castiglioni Palace, commanded not only a view of the entire harbour, the lofty Pharo, and the wide spread sea beyond, but the lofty mountains of Porte Finne were also distinctly visible. The Countess was walking backwards and forwards amid the beautiful profusion of shrubs ranged in vases along the platform, with her two children, when her attention was caught by the snow white sails of the "Wild Gazelle." She knew at once it was an English yacht, and made no doubt but that it was Commander Devereux's beautiful schooner yacht. She watched its evolutions till the schooner cast anchor off the Arsenal, and furled her sails.

The Countess, the following day, received her early playmate and cousin with extreme pleasure, at the same time with a tear dimming her soft beautiful eyes, as recollections of the past came crowding before the mind's eye, as she gazed into the very handsome animated features of the sailor.

"What a great bronzed creature you have

grown, Percy," said the Countess, as they sat side by side on a sofa, and gazed with surprise into each other's features; "you that used to be such a fair curly-headed boy at twelve years old; and yet, though I have not seen you since you were sixteen, when you returned from your first cruise, I am sure, had I met you by accident, I should have known you."

"I should have picked you out, Laura, from amid a thousand," said Percy, thoughtfully. "You look as young almost as when we parted."

"And yet I have had my sorrows and my trials," returned the Countess, a shade passing over her lovely features, but resuming her usual manner, for she was of a cheerful, hopeful nature. "What a life you have led, Percy, since we parted; and how is it I find you still a lone creature after visiting half Europe, to say nothing of the wild lands over the far seas? Can it be possible that no beauty of southern lands has as yet had power

to thaw that cold heart of yours into life and action? Have you seen no eyes as bright as those of your yacht's figure-head, the 'Wild Gazelle?' for the Marquis Durazze tells me that your figure-head is that of a real gazelle, beautifully preserved."

Percy Devereux laughed.

"In truth, Laura," he said, looking into the Countess' brilliant orbs, "I have seen none so bright as those I gaze on now. But where are your dear children? I long to see them. I am, after all, a homely man; a family circle has always a charm for me; perhaps, had I frequented scenes less gay and dazzling, I might have found a heart to suit me; but too much brightness dazzled but left me unscorched."

"Ah!" returned the Countess, thoughtfully, "your hour is not yet come;" and she rung for the children.

The two children soon came running into the saloon; they were lovely children, especially the little girl, then nearly eight years old.

Some men have a peculiar charm of manner that wins upon them, and children soon know that this manner is not put on for the time. Percy loved children, and it was wonderful to see how soon the two little ones now introduced dropped all shyness and reserve with him.

"You will spoil my darlings," said the fond mother, when our hero bade the Countess good-night at a late hour. "I must find you a partner for life; you were not intended to be roaming the world in your 'Wild Gazelle,' wasting your youth, and throwing away all the kindly feelings of your warm nature. Depend on it, I am right; you may smile and shake your head, but your hour will come, Percy, and when you do love, it will be a love as enthusiastic as your nature."

Day after day passed, week after week flew by; the "Wild Gazelle" floated listlessly on the tideless water of Genoa's noble harbour, and still Percy Devereux lingered in

the City of Palaces. Constantly, almost daily, a visitor at the Castiglioni Palazzo, introduced to the flower of the Genoese nobility, the handsome sailor, as he was styled, became an object of great attraction to the fair daughters of Genoa.

One evening, at a conversation at the Countess' palace, Percy was seated in earnest conversation with his charming hostess.

"You are, I see," observed his cousin, "as indifferent as ever, Percy. You cannot deny but that our Genoese maidens are as charming as they are beautiful."

"I am far from indifferent, Laura," returned Devereux; "and I confess many of your charming maidens are beautiful and dangerously fascinating, but—"

"Ah! I see," interrupted the Countess, "I see it now; you require a love with a spice of romance about it."

"Well, you are right, Laura, and I know you will probably laugh at me when I tell

you that I once saw a face—it is now five years ago—that, strange to say, floats before my mind's eyes at intervals, with a singular and extraordinary vividness, and yet it has almost the face of a child—at all events, a mere girl of thirteen or fourteen, perhaps not so much—but there was in that face such an exquisite beauty of expression that really, if I shut my eyes, I see it as if in a dream."

"Now you interest me," said the Countess, "and you have roused my curiosity; but as this is no place for enumerating love adventures, come to me early to morrow, for here we shall be interrupted. But just tell me where you saw that peerless face, and why you have never seen it since."

"Ah!" returned Percy, "it's rather a long story; but as to where I saw this child's face —it was on the shores of the Sea of Azoff, at the close of the Crimean war."

The Countess de Castiglioni started and looked into Percy Devereux's face with a singular expression; but several gentlemen and

ladies coming up, the conversation ceased, and the Countess, as she rose from her seat, said,

"To-morrow! remember!"

CHAPTER II.

Percy Devereux was early at the Castiglioni Palace, and, after a ramble and a romp through the beautiful range of garden of the Palace, with the delighted children, who already loved their new cousin with all the warmth of their sunny clime, the Countess and her guest sat down in her favourite saloon, the windows overlooking the harbour and its forest of masts, and the bright blue sea beyond. Few in Genoa ever remembered so mild and beautiful a month as January, 1860.

"I am quite anxious, Percy, for this proposed tale of yours ; I have a dash of romance in my own disposition. You may remember, when

we were children together, how fond I was of getting you to read me tales of adventures and the wild brave exploits of ancient heroes. Now I must have a full and fair account of your adventures, from the time you entered the Black Sea and cast anchor before that terrible fortress of the Great Czar."

"But, Laura, you will be weary of war details?"

"No, no," interrupted the Countess. "No such thing. I have my reasons, so no brief sketches and jumping at once to your particular adventure. Get to it by degrees, and as we have a long evening to ourselves, try to be remarkably agreeable."

Percy Devereux laughed.

"By Jove! Laura, I have very little to say. Mine is a very short yarn."

"Then I will not listen to you. Spin it out. You sailors I have always heard, are famous for yarns as long as the fore top bowline. Is not that quite correct and nautical too?"

"Upon my life, Laura, a six months' cruise," laughed Devereux, "on board the 'Gazelle,' would make you a perfect sailor. Now, let me think a moment," continued our hero. "I fear I must go back to the period of the Crimean War, when I was a very young lieutenant, and as that war progressed,—a deuce of a discontented one, for instead of brilliant achievements, which we blue jackets fully expected, there we lay, as fine a fleet of ships as the world ever saw, riding at anchor, gazing till we were half blind at that grim old fortress of Sebastopol, and kicking our heels against the deck, and grumbing and growling from morn to night, that we were not allowed to make a dash at the harbour; and I do verily believe, had we done so, we should have taken the place then and there. But it was not to be, as the weary siege dragged on its slow length and horrors multiplied—such as famine, disease, and sad management—slaying its thousands, I was permitted, with others and a party of blue

jack ets, to serve in the trenches. I, by good fortune, happened to perform some mad act, that did some service and got me into notice and won the approbation of Admiral ———, for just as the war was drawing to a close, I was appointed to the command of the gun-boat 'Spitfire,' and, to place myself under the command of Captain Lyons, who was to proceed on an expedition to the Sea of Azoff.

"It was very refreshing indeed to get such an appointment, and to serve under so enterprising and gallant an officer as Captain Lyons.

"When I went on board the 'Spitfire,' I was delighted with all I saw. She was small, to be sure, carried but one gun, but that was a persuader. Her crew were a fine, hearty set of tars, in the highest possible spirits and exulting in the prospect of really having something to do, and certain at all events of not only seeing the enemy, but feeling them.

"On one of the finest mornings possible at

such a period of the year, and in such a climate as that of the Crimean, the allied fleets sailed for Kertch.

"Captain Lyons fleet of gun boats sailed in company. After a fine run we reached our destination, and the troops were landed near a place called the Salt Lake, north of Cape Bourman, the guns of our frigates protecting the troops landing. Here we expected to meet a fierce resistance, but to our surprise the Russians fled, after blowing up the fortifications and the magazines, thus giving us peaceful possession of the really pretty town of Kertch, without striking a blow or firing a shot.

"We are sad grumblers, we sailors; none of us in the 'Spitfire' seemed pleased.

"'I'm blowed,' said a fine young fellow to a comrade, as we returned, 'if this here war ain't the rummest go I know of.'

"'Why, what's the matter with it, Billy boy—hain't you got a whole skin?—isn't that

something, after twelve months' smelling powder?'

"'Smelling!' replied Bill, contemptuously. 'Yes—blow me, that's just it; it's all smell and no taste. I spent three hours yesterday putting an edge to my cutlass—that would shave a pig asleep—expecting to-day to try it on the skins of those Rooshans. I was near one fellow, but he beat me to chalks in running away; I shied my cutlass after him, hoping to trip him up, and then to finish him with my fists. I'm blessed if he didn't stoop, pick it up, and bolted, shouting and laughing like a wild beast.'

"'Then you lost your cutlass, Bill?' said his comrade.

"'No, I'm blowed if I did,' returned Bill, shewing his weapon. 'You see, at first I was for catching the chap, when he threw away, fust his great grey coat, and then his musket. I picked up the musket, and, in a rage at his walking off with my cutlass, I took aim and pulled the trigger; I did not

know that the piece was loaded, but it was, for the Rooshan rolled over, and then I felt ashamed at firing at the poor devil; but before I could reach him he was again on his pins, and, with a savage oath, he pitched my cutlass with all his force at me, giving me a slight gash in the thigh, and then he ran limping away. I picked up my cutlass and let the poor devil go.'

"'Well, Bill, you're in luck, after all,' said his comrade; 'you have shed your blood for the good of your country, at all events, since the Rooshan pricked you with your own cutlass.'

"We had scarcely got aboard when a Russian steamer was observed coming out of the Bay, under full steam, thinking, no doubt, to escape by getting into the Straits of Yenekale. We were at once signalled to give chase, as the 'Spitfire' was one of the fastest amongst the gun boats. Our steam was up; so, slipping our cable, we were off instantly in pursuit.

"The steamer we chased was very large, and appeared to have good way on her; the water was perfectly smooth, but very shallow. We, however, were fast gaining on her, and, as we both rounded the Cape, two large merchant vessels slipped their cables, and followed the steamer. One of these vessels was supposed to carry a large amount of specie. This I did not know till some time after; I was intent on overhauling the steamer. When within reach of our formidable single gun, we opened fire, and soon knocked her spars into splinters, and then down came her smoke jack; but just then we came under the guns of the principal battery of Yenekale, which at once opened a rapid fire upon us, forcing us to abandon the steamer; and shortly after, being joined by two other gun boats, we silenced the batteries, and I resumed my chase of the steamer, which we took with but a slight resistance from a crew that outnumbered us by forty men. On returning, we destroyed a number of barges anchored under

the battery, and then rejoined the fleet. To this exploit I owed my permission to join Captain Lyons in his projected attack upon Yenekale. Separating from the fleet, we sailed for our destination, and arrived there in the middle of the night.

"I was anxiously watching for daylight, for we were informed that the place was very strongly defended. As the daylight made and the light mist that lay upon the still waters dispersed, we obtained a clear view of the town. My only officer aboard the 'Spitfire' was a fine young man of eighteen, a passed midshipman. I was very partial to this youth, a Mr. Adams, for he was brave, skilful, and unassuming; he joined me on deck, just as the sun shewed above the cliffs on which the town is built. We had run in in the night much further than Captain Lyons and his gun-boats, so had a distinct view of the place.

"'It's a strong place, sir,' said young Adams to me, handing me his glass; 'there

is a formidable range of guns along the cliffs.'

"There was, in truth, a very strong battery, and, from its position on the cliffs, capable of doing much mischief to an attacking force. Lying under the cliffs, protected by the batteries, were a considerable number of vessels. Nearly upon a level with the quay was another battery of six field pieces, especially for their protection.

"'Come,' I exclaimed, to Midshipman Adams 'now there will be something more than the smell of powder'—recollecting Bill Badger's observation;—'we have enough to do here.'

"'There goes a signal, sir, from our Commodore's craft,' remarked my first mate.

"I looked at the flags; it was a summons to go on board the captain's ship. So, lowering our gig, I was pulled alongside our commander's vessel, where I met, besides Captain Lyons, Commander Crawford and three other officers.

"After a quarter of an hour's conversation and consultation, Captain Lyons decided that Crawford should proceed with a flag of truce to demand the surrender of the place—the stores and shipping included. If this demand was complied with, the town and private property would be spared; if refused, the inhabitants would be allowed two hours to leave the town, when it would be bombarded and destroyed.

"Commander Crawford requested me to accompany him, which I very willingly agreed to do, with Captain Lyons' consent. Accordingly Commander Crawford and myself were pulled towards the quay in an eight-oared galley, with a flag of truce flying out jauntily in the strong breeze just sprung up.

"'It is as well,' said Commander Crawford, 'to be polite; but depend on it this offer of ours will be declined with curt thanks.'

"'Yes,' I replied, 'it is not likely that they will yield without a fierce struggle; when they do fight, they fight bravely and determinedly.'

"'By Jove! they do, and no mistake. See,' added my companion, 'what a number of Russians are assembled on the quay, and a good sprinkling of officers amongst them, whilst behind the town there is a whole battalion of Cossacks drawn up.'

"'Faith, Percy, this looks like business.'

"We now rapidly approached the landing place at the mole, and as we rounded to, several Russian officers came in front and ordered the people back, and then advanced to the edge of the mole and politely requested us to land. Commander Crawford and I leaped out on the stairs, and the next moment stood beside the four Russian officers, who raised their hats, and we did the same.

"The chief officer of the group was a remarkably fine man; he was a couple or more inches taller than myself. He wore several orders on his breast, and to our surprise addressed us in very good English.

"Commander Crawford, in a quiet, dignified manner, briefly delivered Captain Lyons' message.

"Lieutenant-General Kirchemoff, for that was his name and rank, listened to the terms, as stated by Crawford, quietly and unconcernedly. He then begged my comrade to say to Captain Lyons that the place could not be surrendered under any other terms than that of conquest, and that it would be defended to the utmost; that they had strong batteries, plenty of men, and stout hearts to face any enemy.

"He thanked Captain Lyons for his courtesy, and politely took his leave of us, as we returned to our boat, Commander Crawford saying,

"'I regret the general's answer, as the town and its inhabitants will suffer.'

"'Now then,' said I, as we returned on board the commodore's ship, 'we shall have to open the ball.'

"The order of attack was arranged. The 'Spitfire,' having the lightest draught of water was to lead the way; Captain Lyons' vessel, the 'Recruit,' and the two other gun-

boats were to take up positions as circumstances warranted. It would be needless, Laura, to give you the details of this battle. Suffice it to say that such a storm of shells were pitched into the town that the terrified inhabitants fled in all directions. The artillery and infantry followed, after a very defective fire upon us. In fact I had but one seaman killed and three wounded, though we lay closer in than the other boats; but we dosed them well, chiefly with shells. The 'Recruit' then hoisted the signal for the boats to be manned, and to pull in and burn the stores and ships, anchored beneath the almost deserted batteries. With three hearty cheers the boats gave way for the mole, the men expecting a jolly spree on shore.

"Lieutenant Mackenzie proceeded to fire the ships, more than seventy in number. All the time we were pulling ashore the enemy kept up a vigorous and determined fire of musketry. Amidst a strong volley I got footing on the quay with my own crew, and the

marines from the 'Recruit,' with a dashing company of blue jackets from the two other gunboats, led by their own officers. The ships soon became a prey to the flames, and a grand and, indeed, awful spectacle was soon presented to our view. As the fresh wind increased the flames, a roaring, crackling blaze darted up into the air, sending sparks, and at times fiery beams, as a quantity of powder exploded, high over the cliffs. Having overpowered the resistance of the enemy, I clambered up the cliffs, followed by about twenty blue jackets, shouting and laughing, as they scrambled up the steep ascent, some tumbling and rolling down the declivity, but were soon up again; and full of frolic we all got into a wide street of good houses, at the far end of which were immense stores, which we intended to burn. The terrified inhabitants were flying in all directions; men, women, and children, dogs, horses, and innumerable pigs. My men were ordered on no account to hurt or injure any of the inhabitants. Such

a multitude of screaming, shrieking pigs were rushing here and there that the sailors were frequently tumbled over, and lay scrambling in the mud, with a pig tightly embraced, amid the laughter of their comrades.

"We were making straight for the stores, when a dozen Russian soldiers came in sight from a cross street, dragging violently along a man in plain clothes, whilst others were rudely repulsing a young girl, who, with her head bare and her long tresses of hair streaming behind her in the strong breeze, was shrieking wildly for help in English, looking towards us at the same time.

"I made a rush forward, receiving the discharge of two or more muskets, aimed at me, but providentially only knocking off my hat and cutting my belt in two, inflicting a mere scratch. A brutal soldier would have knocked the young girl on the head; but I caught the blow on my cutlass, seized her round the waist, and knocked over her persecutor.

"'Oh! sir. Oh! for God's sake rescue my

father,' she exclaimed, and became insensible.

"A dozen of my men rushed after the Russian soldiers to rescue the young girl's father. Lifting the girl in my arms, I entered a house whose entire inhabitants had fled, except an old woman and a girl with a child in her arms. They fell on their knees, and said in Russian some words which, I suppose meant 'don't kill us.' I spoke to them in French, which the old woman understood. I told them to get some water, and that no harm was intended them. I then laid the poor girl on a settle, and cast a glance at her face. Her eyes just then opening and her lips parting, she cried in an agony of fear,

"'Oh! my father, my dear father!'

"Heavens! what a lovely youthful face I then beheld. She could scarcely be fourteen, but such an exquisitely beautiful face I never before beheld. It was one I think I have seen a hundred times in my dreams. I cannot account for the impression that child's

face made upon me. She drank a little water and then again looking me anxiously in the face said,

"'Oh! sir, do save my father; he is not a Russian.'

"Loud shouts sounded from without; I heard the cheers of my men. Saying, 'Stay here, and I will look for your father; I feel sure he has been rescued,' I rushed out of the house, and found my men and some ten or twelve of the men of the 'Recruit,' who had fired the stores, hotly engaged with a retreating party of infantry, which, after a fierce struggle, gave way and fled, and we followed them in hot pursuit. We were now, having done all the mischief we could, recalled to our boats, for the enemy, recovering from their panic, were mustering in great force outside the town.

"I now inquired for the stranger—the young girl's father—for I had directed several of my men to keep him in sight, whilst I rescued the daughter and carried her into the

house. They said he had escaped from the Russian soldiers, just at that moment charged by a party of our marines, and that he had disappeared round a corner of a street. I now, with a couple of men only, retraced my way to the house where I had left the young girl. When I got there she was gone. The old woman told me that she was looking eagerly out of the window after my departure, when a tall man dressed in plain clothes ran by the window. The young girl shrieked out, 'my father, my dear father!' and rushed wildly out of the house, and she saw her no more.

"I felt vexed, but I made no doubt that she overtook her father, and that he would hurry to the quay, and place himself and daughter under our protection. On reaching the mole and making inquiries, I heard that a strange gentleman and a young girl had gone off in one of the 'Recruit's' boats, to place himself under the protection of Captain Lyons.

"Having collected our wounded, we all now re-embarked, and returned aboard our respective vessels. I had hardly reached the 'Spitfire' and seen to the comfort of my wounded, when a boat from the 'Recruit' brought me orders to sail immediately with despatches from Captain Lyons to the admiral; so we up anchor, steam well up, and away we went."

"What!" exclaimed the Countess, abruptly, "sailed away without one enquiry after father or daughter?"

"What could I do, Laura?" returned Percy Devereux, with a smile. "I could not think of disobeying orders, or delay sailing, to make inquiries after a perfect stranger and his daughter. I knew that they got safe aboard the 'Recruit,' and besides I expected to rejoin Captain Lyons; and again, Laura, though I felt strongly and even strangely interested, and somewhat curious, you could scarcely expect me to fall in love with a child of fourteen."

"Hum!" muttered the Countess. "It appears to me, Percy, that you never really experienced the tender passion in your life."

"Oh! haven't I, indeed?" returned Percy, laughing. "Ah! you mistake; at all events I'm heart whole at present."

"But," inquired the Countess, "you surely made some inquiry when you rejoined Captain Lyons?"

"Alas!" returned our hero, "I never rejoined my gallant commander. I was, on reaching the fleet, employed on several expeditions. I first went to Constantinople, and various other places, and to my deep grief, when I did rejoin the fleet, it was after the gallant Captain Lyons' death. He died from the effects of a very slight wound, received in an attack upon the sea defences of Sebastapol. Strange to say, I never met any of the officers who served at that time in the Recruit. I did, however, fall in with two sailors belonging to her. They remembered the 'strange' gentleman and his daugh-

ter coming aboard, and being very kindly received by Captain Lyons, and on their way back to Sebastopol, Captain Lyons put them aboard an English barque bound for Constantinople. They said the stranger was not an Englishman, for he spoke a foreign language when conversing with Captain Lyons, and they heard him call the young girl Camilla. I never heard any thing further, and am only amazed that the event, and the memory of this young girl's sweet pale features remain, so vividly before my mind's eye.

"The last year I sailed up the Black Sea—visited the Sea of Azoff—landed at Kertch and Genetch—made all kinds of enquiries—but my curiosity remained unsatisfied.'

"Well, it's very strange," said the Countess, musingly ; "do you think now, Percy, if you were to see this fair incognito you would recognise her ?"

"Yes, I should think I would," returned Commander Devereux. "Lee me see. Sup-

pose she was, when I rescued her, about fourteen. A very great change will no doubt, have taken place, but I think those beautiful full, large, liquid blue eyes, I should recognise again. She was exquisitely fair, with the richest auburn hair, and at her age, in profusion. She promised to be tall. Yes, I think I should recognise her, but that event will never take place."

"Not so very an improbable event," said the Countess, "for such a rambler as you are. I think it's probable that your young beauty's father was an Italian."

"That is very likely," returned Percy Devereux; "but why should an Italian and his child be detained as prisoners by the Russians? And how came the young girl to speak English so fluently?"

"We can only surmise, for we are all in the dark respecting your *incognita*, but for all that give me some few days to make enquiries; from one or two incidents in your tale, I have a faint idea that I may

discover some trace of this Signor and his daughter. However, do not be at all sanguine. But now tell me, Percy, what do you really think of the state Italy is thrown into? Such wild schemes and plots are concocted in every city. Genoa swarms with adventurers, and all seem to regard that strange man, Garibaldi, as a demi-god. Is there any truth in the report that he intends to drive the Neapolitan King from his throne?"

"He certainly will try to do it," returned Commander Devereux, "and I have a very strong presentiment that he will do so. I shall certainly take a cruise to Sicily, and have a look at this most decidedly brave and high-minded adventurer. He puts me in mind of Gaston De Foix, but not unlike the Italian Condottiero of old."

"Well, Percy, at all events, do not be in a hurry to leave Genoa. You promised me a tolerably long visit, and already you are planning further rambles. I should not be sur-

prised if I heard that you had donned the red shirt of Garibaldi's followers."

"Not quite so romantically inclined, Cousin mine," said Percy, laughingly ; "but now let me have a romp in the gardens with my old favourites."

A few days after this conversation, Percy Devereux entertained a large party of caveleros and some of the fairest dames and maidens in Genoa. It was the middle of March—a March of singular mildness even for Genoa.

A very beautiful day was the one selected for a cruize in the "Wild Gazelle." The breeze was the *tramontana*, which blows from the shore, and leaves the waters of the Gulf of Genoa as tranquil as a land-locked lake.

The ladies were in raptures with the smooth swift, gliding motion of the yacht, and the rapidity with which she divided the mimic waves as they rippled and played against her sharp, elongated bows.

As the sun set in the west, and tinged the blue waves of the Gulf with colours of gold,

sea and sky became tinged with a glow known only in southern climes. The yacht returned from Porto Finno with her delighted freight of gay excursionists, and anchored in her usual berth, and as the fair visitors departed to meet in the evening at the Countess Castiglioni's for a dance, they thought how great a pity it was that so handsome, so gallant a sailor as their entertainer, should be without a mistress.

CHAPTER III.

March gave place to April, the month of smiles and tears, and then lovely May opened its countless flowers in the famed lands of the south, and still Percy Devereux lingered in the gay city of Genoa. He was continually questioning the Countess as to her progress in discovering some trace of this fair *incognita*, the Countess kept his hopes alive, and very skilfully added to the real curiosity he felt to discover some trace of the unknown Signor and his daughter. At last he was getting impatient, and the exciting accounts of the progress of events taking place in Italy induced our hero to tell the Countess

that he intended leaving for Palermo the Happy, when the Countess again roused his flagging hopes by telling him she had a most interesting disclosure to make, and begged him to come the next day early, as she had a great deal to say.

Percy Devereux was at the Castiglioni Palace at a very early hour. After half-an-hour spent in the gardens with the children, who were then consigned to the care of their attendants, the Countess and our hero seated themselves in the pleasant saloon overlooking the harbour of Genoa.

"I fear, Percy," said the Countess, "you are beginning to regret the three or four months you have spent in Genoa."

"Why should you think that, Laura?" asked our hero; "on the contrary, I shall always remember those hours passed in your society, as some of the very pleasantest in my life."

"Well, dear cousin, I was not fishing for compliments, but I allow I have somewhat

deceived you for the last five or six weeks. I had an object in view, and I think I may now let you into a little secret of mine. You must join me in a plot."

"A plot!" repeated Percy, with a laugh; "anything to do with the French Emperor, the Pope, Victor Emanuel, or Garibaldi?"

"Nothing of the kind," returned the Countess. "My plot is a very unpolitical one. I want you to join me in rescuing a most lovely girl from a life of misery—from persecution."

"I will help you with heart and soul, Laura—always provided you do not want to entangle me in the matrimonial noose."

"Perhaps," said the Countess, demurely, "that catastrophe must be left to Fate; but keep quiet and be attentive, and I will tell you a true story that I promise will deeply interest you."

"I will be the most attentive of listeners," responded the sailor, looking serious.

"Before I begin my tale, Percy, tell me are you a believer that love at first sight is

not a merely unmeaning thing, got up by poets and romancers?"

"I do really believe that there is a mysterious power or sympathy, or whatever you may call it, that sometimes acts upon two human beings, brought together for the first time, that produces that overpowering passion called Love."

"Very good," returned the Countess; "I will now commence my story."

"Some twenty years ago, there resided in the territory of Genoa two brothers, who were greatly attached to each other, though exceedingly dissimilar in person, manners, and disposition. Count Giuseppe Barracco, the elder brother, it is said, was a remarkably tall, handsome man—gay, gallant, generous and most affable, but considered, for a good Catholic as he was supposed to be, rather free in his opinions, and rather lax in the observances of Mother Church.

"Beppo Barracco, the younger brother, was a singular contrast to the elder. I can

describe him from my own observations, for I knew him very well, as our two Palazzos near Sestre Di Ponenti, are close together, only divided by some gardens or shrubberies. He is a man of middle height, massively built, dark complexion, with a severe and stern expression of countenance ; in disposition he is bigoted to a degree, and superstitious enough for a Monk of the middle ages, and I may add a furious zealot in the cause of Mother Church. It is said he never abandons a purpose once resolved upon, but will carry it out without the slightest regard to consequences. I am particular in my remarks, Percy, for two reasons : first, I am, to a certain extent connecte dwith the Barracco's, and secondly, I think it necessary you should have some idea of what kind of man Beppo Baracco is."

"By Jove! Laura, you mystify me ! You a relation of this man! Ah! I suppose he was a connection of your lamented husband?"

"No," answered the Countess ; "he is in

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no way connected with the Castiglionis. I will explain to you as I go on with my story. I have said that the Count Barracco was a gay, a gallant cavalier, and very handsome; he travelled a great deal, and when six-and-twenty he went to England, where he resided for a couple of years, and there he fell in love with a beautiful English maiden he met at a gentleman's seat in Lancashire, where he was on a visit. This young lady was a Miss Latimer, a first cousin of my dear lamented mother. She was a strict Roman Catholic, and so were all her family and most of her connections. She captivated the Count, and, as he was of high family and possessed of a large fortune, his proposal for the hand of Emily Latimer was willingly accepted by her family, and they were married in Preston."

"You surprise me, Laura," remarked Percy Devereux. "I knew your mother's name was Latimer, but boys seldom trouble themselves about family connections; but your mother was not a Roman Catholic?"

"No," returned the Countess; "her family, though Latimers, were all Protestants. But to continue:

"Though Emily Latimer was very beautiful and clever, she was of a very weak and timid disposition, and also very rigid in her notions of religious observances, and in which she soon found her husband was not; but he was a kind, generous, noble-hearted man, and loved her dearly.

"Beppo Barracco was at first sadly annoyed when he heard of his brother's marriage with an Englishwoman; but when he learnt that the bride was a firm and rigid Catholic, he became reconciled, and when the Count returned with his young wife, Beppo received her with great cordiality. Residing within less than a mile of his brother's residence at Sestri, he was, as he previously had been, a constant visitor. The Count never interfered with his wife's strict observance of her religious duties; neither did he object to the

father confessor Beppo introduced as the family confessor. Imperceptibly this priest and Beppo Barracco gained great influence over the mind of the young wife, soon to become a mother.

"When the Countess gave birth to a fine boy there were great rejoicings; Giusseppe Barracco was a fond husband, and the young mother became absorbed in her love for her infant. No doubt, if this child had lived the Countess would gradually have recovered her serenity, and the gloomy views of life instilled into her mind by Father Antoine would have faded away; but, unfortunately, the child, when eight or nine months old, sickened and died. I need not say the Count and Countess bitterly deplored the loss of their heir; but when another was born and died at nearly the same age, and also a boy, the mother's despair was overwhelming. About this time the Count was obliged to make a journey to England to secure a large inheritance

left to his wife by an uncle who had resided much of his life in India, and had amassed considerable wealth.

"During the Count's absence at this critical period, when the Countess, mind was weakened by her bereavements, Father Antoine insinuated, but most cautiously, that her bereavement was in part a punishment upon the Count, her husband, for his great neglect of his religious duties; in fact, he insinuated that he was inoculated by the doctrines of Luther, and that in heart and ideas he was a Protestant. You can imagine, Percy, how these two men worked upon the mind of the poor Countess; in fact, so much power had they gained over her that she made a solemn vow, should Providence bestow upon her another child, and that child be a girl, she should be dedicated to the service of the church, and take the veil at the age of eighteen, and that the convent in which she should become a nun should be endowed with the mother's personal fortune, which, on

her marrying, was settled upon her and snbject to her own disposal."

"But, Laura," interrupted Percy Devereux, a good deal astonished, "what motive could these two men have in thus perverting the mind of the Countess, and thus poison her existence ?"

"Bigotry!" returned the Countess Castiglioni. "Beppo Barracco was a Jesuit; Father Antoine his tool; to gain proselytes and wealth for Mother Church, their only aim. Besides, Beppo was furious at his brother's disregard of their holy religion, and his supposed adoption of the Protestant faith. I must acknowledge, from all I have heard and now know, that Beppo himself was not at all actuated by any desire of enriching himself. He possessed a very independent fortune, and intended never to marry.

"The Countess, when again near being a mother, told her husband of her vow, to devote the child, if a girl, to a life of religious seclusion; that she was to be a nun if she

lived, and then, perhaps, Heaven might be appeased and grant them a son and heir. The Count was at first inclined to laugh.

"'Appease heaven!' he said; 'for what, my love? I hope you do not conceive we are guilty of any crime. Who has put this unnatural determination into your head? I cannot consent to barter my child, should we have a girl, for a—'

"'Oh! my beloved husband,' interrupted the Countess, her countenance shewing the agony of mind she suffered, 'do not further anger Heaven. Have we not lost two noble boys in a most singular manner, and at the same age?—does not that shew—'

"'It shews nothing unnatural, whatever, *mia cara*," said the husband, tenderly; 'hundreds have sustained the same bereavement, without imagining that the Deity was punishing them for some imaginary sin. That bigoted Priest Antoine has been tampering with your weakness, or blinding you to the sin you are actually anticipating.'

"Seeing his wife getting ill from agitation and religious terrors, the Count ceased, and, by tender caresses and promises to think over her vow, restored her to some degree of composure.

"The Count severely censured Father Antoine, and would have dismissed him from his household, only he feared the effect such a proceeding would have on his wife, who expected her confinement daily. Beppo was then in Rome. A few days afterwards the Countess gave birth to a female child, and alas! it was apparent that in giving it birth, she was destined to lose her own life.

"Are you in any degree superstitious, Percy?" asked the Countess, pausing and fixing her eloquent eyes upon her cousin.

"I cannot say," returned our hero, "that I am in the least, but still we know from history and other sources that some very great men have and do hold what we call superstious ideas on certain subjects."

"Well," observed Laura, "I guessed as

much, though I have often heard that sailors have often very superstitious notions, and that they hold certain days of the week, exceedingly unlucky, and will not on any account go to sea on those days. I know that I am rather prone to this feeling, and I do believe most women are."

"But why, Laura, have you put this question to me ?"

"I really can scarcely tell why I interrupted my narrative to ask you that question; but a thought came into my head at the moment. But I must get on, I fear I am very prolix and tire you."

"Far from it, Laura; I am uncommonly interested, and I guess that this infant just born—"

"*Madre mio*—not exactly—just born," laughed the Countess; "seventeen years have gone by, and some months, since that event took place. But what were you going to say ?"

"Why, I suppose this child dedicated to a

convent life before it was born, is the identical girl you expect me to aid you in rescuing from Mother Church."

"You are right there, Percy; and, moreover, I really have got it into my head that you may possibly be induced to make this young girl your wife."

Percy Devereux leaned back on the sofa, bursting out into uncontrollable laughter.

"Well, Laura, that's capital!—by Jove! Do you want me to have all the thunders of the Catholic Church hurled at my head? Besides, I should not marry a Roman Catholic for the wealth of Golconda. What! have a great, sleek father confessor, with a beard like a he-goat, closeted at certain periods with my wife! The gods forbid!"

"Ah! I'm almost afraid that I shall never be able to ensnare you into the trammels of matrimony," said the Countess, with a serious countenance, and a sigh, "to my beautiful and accomplished Camilla."

"What's that you say, Laura?" interrupted

Devereux, with a start. "Did you say her name was Camilla—why that's the name of my little *incognita* of Yenekale!"

"Yes," returned the Countess, "they have the same name; but, you know, Camilla is not at all an uncommon name in Italy. You call your *incognita* a little beauty—my *protegée* is a full-grown and most exquisitely lovely woman. However, to expedite matters and rouse you into positive activity, I must tell you that my *protegée* and relation is no other than your little *incognita* of—what's the name of that barbarous place?"

"Good Heavens! how strange and extraordinary!" said Percy Devereux, springing to his feet and gazing into his cousin's face with a wonderful increase of colour.

"But that's not telling me the name of the town," said the Countess, "where you fell so desperately in love with a child."

"Pardon me, my dear cousin," and Percy actually coloured to the temples, but the next instant, laughing heartily, he said, reseating

himself, "Yenekale, my dear Laura ; that's the name. But I see you are inclined to quiz me about this little girl. I give you my word, I was not in love with the child—how could I? she was only fourteen—but I certainly felt greatly interested."

"Oh ! no doubt about that," returned the Countess; "and no doubt if ever you see the young lady, this deep interest will be changed into a far deeper love. Now that you know who my *protegée* is, are you prepared to rush blindfold into matrimony—for your promising to do so will encourage me to proceed—or shall I look for another cavalier to carry off my fair *protegée* ?"

"It is the duty of every gallant gentleman to afford protection to your sex," said Percy Devereux, with a smile; "therefore I place myself in your hands, and will obey you implicitly."

"Ah!" said the Countess, with a little wickedness in her smile, "I forget that you expressed a horror of the thunders of

Holy Mother Church being hurled at your head."

"Oh! let them thunder away, dear Laura," said our hero, "their thunder is without lightning now—only makes a noise. I am really very curious, and must beg you to proceed. Let me see where were you?"

"Why, just," said the Countess, "where the baby to be dedicated to a religious life was born. I have seventeen years to get over. My story will be a long one."

"I tell you what, cousin mine, you must do. Just manage the affair as the genuine three volume novelists do: jump from infancy into full blown womanhood!"

"I cannot possibly do anything of the kind," replied the Countess. "I must tell my story my own way. Unless I do so, you will never understand the position. You sailors think to carry everything by a *coup de main*, but it won't do here; there are almost insurmountable difficulties to overcome. However, I will make my narrative as concise as

possible, so now sit quiet and listen attentively to me. What I am going to relate is reality, not romance."

"As the child," continued the Countess, casting a glance at her attentive listener, "grew in years, her infant beauty and sweet precocious ways won strongly on the father's heart. During an absence of his brother Beppo, he suddenly undertook a journey to England, where he stayed eight years, giving the little Camilla every advantage in education possible, and making her perfect in the English language, and at the same time, as the lady who undertook the care of her was a Protestant, he never prevented her from influencing the young girl in her religious principles; in fact he became wilfully blind to her becoming a Protestant, being himself a most uncompromising upholder of the Romish faith.

"Camilla was thirteen, when pressing business called the Count back to Italy.

"On reaching his native land he took up

his residence at Sester, in his splendid palazzo there, and had the first masters to finish his daughter's education. Beppo was then in Sester, gloomy and discontented. He beheld the conduct of his brother with respect to the education of his daughter with a terrible feeling of dissatisfaction, and one day he said to the Count, in a bitter, cutting tone,

"'What is the use of imparting all these wordly accomplishments to one dedicated to seclusion and retirement from the world?'

"'Pooh! pooh! Beppo,' interrupted the Count, with a good humoured smile. 'You do not imagine surely that I am going to sacrifice my only and idolised child. Neither do I want to cheat Mother Church out of her profits. A splendid gift will pacify the Lady Abbess of St. Ursula, and an appropriate dowry to the Holy Father will appease his scruples.'

"'What!' said Beppo Barracco. 'Do you think by such gifts to save the soul of

your wife, whose vow is registered in Heaven?'

"'Humph!' muttered the Count, 'when my beloved and lamented wife made a rash vow, she did not contemplate her own death, and that, were such a vow followed up, it would leave me a childless, broken-hearted man.'

"'You do not believe. No,' almost fiercely exclaimed Beppo. 'You do not believe, or you would not thus condemn your wife's soul to everlasting torment, and your child's also!'

"'Come, come, Beppo,' said the Count, calmly. 'This is pure bigotry. Do not let two brothers, hitherto fondly attached, become embittered against each other, because their ideas on certain subjects differ. My mind is made up, and no human eloquence will alter it!'

"'But God will!' said Beppo, passionately, 'and in a manner that will vindicate his power;' and turning round he left the room.

"To get rid of the perpetual reproaches of his brother, who never ceased trying to work upon his mind, and to terrify his daughter, the Count resolved to spend a year or two in visiting various parts of Italy. Accordingly he left home with his daughter and two female attendants for Naples. They sailed in a fine English merchant ship. Violent gales drove them out of their course, and finally a Russian corvette, returning to Sebastapol, chased them, for the Crimean war had then begun; but when they sailed from Genoa, the Mediterranean was considered perfectly free of Russian ships of war, but this well known corvette had run the gauntlet, and got into the Mediterranean, captured several rich prizes, French and English, and was then about to dare the passage back to the Black Sea. They were soon overtaken and boarded, and the Count Barracco and his daughter and attendants made prisoners. The vessel was plundered and then burned; the captain

and crew left in their boats, to reach land if they could.

"The Count was furious, but what could he do? After a wonderful voyage, from hair-breath escapes of being taken by the numerous English cruisers, the Russian war steamer got into the Black Sea, and Odessa and Sebastopol being invested, she kept the southern shore, and finally succeeded in making Kertch. The captain of the steamer was well aware that he had captured a very wealthy Italian nobleman and his daughter, and he determined to make the most of his prizes. He placed them in a comfortable mansion, but hearing that Kertch was likely to be attacked, he sailed with them to Yenekale.

"He then told the Count he would ransom him and his daughter for forty thousand crowns. To this the Count assented, and matters were in progress for this purpose, when the English fleet of gunboats, under

Captain Lyons, attacked the place. You, Percy, know the result of that attack, as it was you who rescued the Count and his daughter."

"You see I have been very brief," continued the Countess, after a pause. "The part that remains to be told, I am mixed up in. What do you think, so far?"

"Why," said the impatient owner of the "Wild Gazelle," "that, like the postcript in a lady's letter, what's to come will be the pith of your story, which you have told so remarkably well that I must compliment you on your conciseness."

The Countess smiled, and after a moments' thoughtful silence, continued,

"You see, Percy, the reason why you could never trace the young girl you rescued was that Captain Lyons put her and her father on board an English brig bound to Constantinople. When they were landed, thence they returned, after a long, tedious journey by sea and land, to Genoa, to the

intense surprise of Beppo and all the Count's friends, who thought them lost, and that the vessel they had embarked in had foundered at sea.

"Time rolled on, and just as Camilla entered her sixteenth year and her father was preparing and opening a communication with Rome, to procure a dispensation from his Holiness, he was thrown from his horse, crossing a ford near Albingo, and killed on the spot. What Camilla suffered I need not repeat to you. She fell completely under the control of Beppo, but fortunately at this time I returned from England, and the moment I heard of her bereaved state, I hastened to protect and console her. Then for the first time I came into personal contact with Beppo Barracco, and I soon came to understand what a desperate Jesuit I had to contend with, if I persisted in seeking to save one of the most charming creatures in existence from a terrible doom. My villa at Sester is in the immediate

vicinity of Count Barracco's mansion, and our gardens join. When I heard of Camilla's bereavement and her solitary and secluded life, I made it my pleasure to become her consoler; I soon became fascinated with her beauty, her sweet caressing disposition, and singularly well informed mind. No visitors excepting myself were received at the Barracco mansion. Beppo, though cold and repellant in his manner to every one, did not ill-treat his ward. He allowed her everything her father did, but he distinctly told her that when she became of age, that is eighteen, she was to begin her noviciate in the Convent of St. Ursula, in Milan. Camilla at first remonstrated, and hinted that her religious opinions did not coincide with the wishes of her uncle.

"'What! degenerate girl,' he exclaimed, passionately, for his temper is violent to a degree, 'Would you condemn your mother's soul to everlasting punishment?'

"This and many other forcible arguments

were used by Beppo Barracco—a Jesuit in all his acts. I trembled for the poor girl's mind, but she astonished me by the firmness and decision of her character.

"'If,' said she, 'I could for a moment believe that my lamented mother's future state could be ameliorated by any sacrifice on my part, I should not hesitate. But it strikes me that the Divine Will is as likely to be influenced by the prayers of a daughter supplicating for mercy as a simple Christian, as he Deity would be by her prayers as a professed nun.'

"Some months ago, I obtained leave from the Signor Barracco for the young Countess (for by a royal grant to the first Count Barracco, the title goes to the surviving child, male or female; should she die, Beppo Barracco would succeed to the title and estates), but as I was saying, I obtained leave for the young Countess, for change of air, to accompany me to my country mansion at Ognelia, for a few weeks. Ognelia is one of

the most romantic valleys on the Riveri de Ponnente, and for salubrity of climate, far superior to Nice. I should not have obtained that permission had not Beppo fancied that Camilla looked delicate, and required change of scene. I also solemnly promised whilst she remained with me I would have no guests.

"Accordingly we left Sester for my residence at Ognelia. My mansion is situated on the side of a hill, richly wooded, and its base washed by the ever blue waves of the Mediterranean. There I truly learned to love my beautiful and charming relative, and I vowed in my own mind to exert every influence that rank and wealth gave me to save her from a doom she abhorred."

"Hark!" said the Countess, pausing in her narrative; "here are visitors, and I must leave my narrative unfinished. But tell me, Percy—are you interested?"

"Deeply so, Laura, and believe me, I also will act any part you assign me to save your

charming relative from the clutches of Mother Church, and yet I confess I cannot imagine how."

"Hush! here are the Marchioness Durazzo and her two handsome, but proud and self-sufficient daughters. Pray do not leave me to their mercy."

CHAPTER IV.

Percy Devereux, when he left the Palazzo Castiglioni to return to his hotel, felt completely puzzled as to his future proceedings. That he might unravel his somewhat confused ideas, he ascended a flight of steps, and found himself on the broad walk that runs along the sea wall surrounding the noble harbour of Genoa. At that time of the day few, if any Genoese frequented this favourite spot, so that he walked on, plunged in thought.

"I cannot imagine," he said to himself, "why the young Countess of Barracco should be at all subject to the despotic will of her uncle."

In the nineteenth century it appeared to him impossible that any young person professing a different creed from the Romish Church could be forced into a convent, and made to take the veil.

"That would be all very well," he muttered, half aloud, "if we lived in the middle ages. The Countess Castiglioni must be afraid of this redoubtable Beppo Barracco. Now, if I can only persuade this charming maiden to evince some return for my love—for love her I shall, there is no doubt about that, all I will ask is to let me deal with her worthy uncle."

At that moment one of those sudden and violent squalls so common at that period of the year, descending from the lofty hill that backs the city, fell upon the rampart with extraordinary violence, whirled off our hero's hat, which flew over the wall, and was carried a considerable distance over the waters of the port; at the same moment piercing shrieks and a cry for help struck his ear;

looking over the wall, he perceived a small, lateen-rigged boat, with several persons in it, had turned over to the squall.

The boat was making for the landing-place, a few yards from where Percy Devereux stood. Seeing two females struggling in the water, he instantly kicked off his shoes, threw of his coat and waistcoat, and rushing down the steps, plunged into the water, and struck out for the capsized boat; he perceived three or four men had scrambled up on the boat to them, but he also saw that one of the two females was still above water, and that the men on the boat were struggling courageously to drag up from the water the second female, Percy Devereux made at once for the drowning female, for the force of the squall was driving the upset boat from her. She was just disappearing when he grasped her long hair, the only thing then visible. Being a bold and powerful swimmer, he was enabled to hold the young girl's head above water. As he did so, a faint cheer came from the boat,

that was drifting seaward, but several boats from different vessels who had witnessed the accident, were pulling vigorously for the boat and those that clung to it. In the meantime our hero gained the steps from which he had started, and lifted his insensible burden from the water. She was scarcely sensible, but nevertheless she showed signs of life. She was, he saw, belonging to the class of artizans, neatly attired, very young, and as well as he could judge, extremely beautiful. He was left only a few minutes alone with the rescued maiden, who had just recovered a little by his exertions, and had opened her eyes, when two boats pulled up to the steps, and a young man, his garments dripping wet, sprung out of the boat, exclaiming—

"Ah! the Blessed Virgin be praised; you are saved, Marcella," and he sunk on his knees beside the girl.

"Per Bacco! yes," said the sailors in the boats? "thanks to this noble Signor's gallantry and daring."

The young man caught our hero's hand, laying, with much emotion—

"I owe the Signor a life. Mine is at his service."

"The best thing you can do," said Percy Devereux, "is to get this young girl home at once. Was there any one lost from the capsized boat?"

"No, Signor, no," returned the sailors; "they are all safe enough."

Percy Devereux was a considerable distance from his hotel, and he was not in a very agreeable state to walk through the city, therefore, stepping into a waterman's boat that had just come up, after picking up his coat and shoes, he told the men to put him on board the "Wild Gazelle" lying off the Arsenal.

After receiving the most profound thanks from the young girl's friends who had arrived in another boat, our hero proceeded to his yacht. The watermen, when they knew that their fare was the owner of the splendid yacht,

the "Wild Gazelle," showed him the most profound respect.

"Do you know who the people were, capsized in that boat?" questioned Percy.

"*Si*, Signor," replied one of the men. "The Ragazzo is the grand-daughter of the major-domo of the Signor Beppo Barracco. She is accounted *multo bello*, and the young man, her lover, is called Antonio the Lucky. He is a waterman."

"Faith, he was scarcely worthy of his sobriquet to-day, seing he nearly got drowned, besides nearly drowning his sweetheart."

"Ah! Signor," returned one of the men, "that's it. He has been capsized in that boat a dozen times; can't swim any more than a stone, and yet every time he has been saved by some lucky chance. The last time he upset, he was alone, and was a mile off the harbour. He, however, got on the boat's bottom, and drifted for eight hours, out to

sea, and was, just in the nick of time, picked up by a felucca from Bastia, who brought him and his unlucky boat back to Genoa."

"Well, I feel very gratified," said our hero, "that, under Providence, I saved that young and pretty girl's life."

"Madonna! she is a good and pretty maiden," said the waterman, "for I have known her from a child. We are neighbours; but she is going to leave the city, and become an attendant upon the Signor Barracco's niece, who resides at Sester."

"This is strange," thought our hero, as the boat pulled up alongside the graceful "Gazelle," and giving a liberal donation to the boatman, sprang aboard, to the infinite amazement of the yacht's crew.

Having explained matters in a few words, he descended into the cabin, changed his garments, and was then rowed ashore, and at once proceeded to his hotel.

That night was passed in a confusion of thought. He said to himself, "I am going to

embark in an adventure that is intended to end in matrimony. It is quite true I have always felt a strange interest in the young girl I rescued at Yenikale, and often wished to know who she was, and to see her again, and now, in a strange manner, I have unexpectedly discovered her, but am, singularly enough, asked to rescue her from her uncle's machinations, and then to marry her."

"Well," he went on soliloquising, "I suppose it's man's destiny to marry sometime or other. So I'm resigned," and he fell asleep.

After breakfast the following day, he proceeded to the Castiglioni Palace, being somewhat impatient to hear the end of the Countess' communication, and to learn by what means the Countess proposed to bring about the renewal of his acquaintanceship with the young Countess of Barracco.

"You ought, my dear cousin," said the Countess to our hero, after a short ramble with the children through the orange groves, "to have lived in the middle ages, and

roamed the world as the rescuer of distressed damsels."

"I am happy to say, Laura, that I did not live in those iron days, or I should not have been here now. By your saying what you did, I suppose you heard of the ducking I had yesterday."

"In truth I did, Percy. In fact I saw the accident from the balcony. I was looking out over the harbour, and my attention was caught by the white sails of a pretty boat crossing the harbour. Whilst I looked, to my surprise and terror, I beheld the boat capsize, and then I saw the squall tearing up the water, and driving the spray high into the air till it passed over the east mole. I feared some one would be drowned, and, feeling anxious, I sent one of my domestics down to the quay, and told him to wait until he gained some intelligence.

"He came back, two hours afterwards, with the intelligence that the boat that upset belonged to Antonio the Lucky, who was out

with his sweetheart, Marcella Gavone and some others, and that the pretty Marcella, who is very well known to me, would have been drowned, only Captain Devereux, of the yacht the 'Wild Gazelle,' swam out and brought her ashore by the Doria water steps. You see, Percy, you are always in the way when a pretty girl is in want of assistance. Now this little adventure will introduce your name to the young Countess Barracco, for Marcella is her favourite attendant. She was home on a visit, with her grandfather and Antonio Gavone, who, notwithstanding his propensity of capsizing in that unlucky boat of his, and which he persists in calling one of the fastest and safest boats in the harbour, is a very well looking and smart boatman, and very well to do, for he is the private waterman and boat keeper of the Durazzo family."

"But does Camilla know the name of her rescuer at Yenikale ?"

"No," returned the Countess, "she does

not; but sit down, and I will resume my narrative, which is just spun out, as you sailors would say, and then we'll talk over the matter, and see in what way I can possibly introduce you to my *protegée*."

"I do not see any difficulty in that, Laura," said our hero.

"But I do," responded the Countess, "considerable difficulty. I leave Genoa to-morrow for my mansion at Sester De Ponenti and Beppo Barracco sets out for Rome to-morrow, no doubt to hasten his project of immuring his niece, and Camilla is permitted to spend the three weeks he will be absent with me at my residence at Sester."

"Well," hastily interrupted the impatient sailor, "by Jove! can anything be more propitious?"

"Oh!" interrupted the Countess, laughing, "you think yourself a second Cæsar—*veni*, *vidi*, *vici*. So in three weeks you have the vanity to think you will be able to persuade this fair young Countess to fall in love with

you, and to rush into your arms, instead of those of Mother Church."

"Indeed, you wrong me, Laura," interposed Percy Devereux, colouring, "I am as free from vanity as any man living, and—"

"There, you need not attempt to vindicate yourself. I think I may say I know you are; but now, let us be serious, for the happiness of a young life depends upon the events of the next four weeks. You forget, though this is the nineteenth century, that you are in a Catholic country, and that the power of the priesthood is still terrible. Camilla herself, though determined to resist the projects of her uncle, will do nothing rash, and still thinks she can counteract his intentions by calm and resolute argument. But the dear girl little knows Beppo Barracco. She will be carried off without a moment's warning, placed within the walls of a convent, from which I fear no power that we possess, could ever release her.

"I have given my solemn word of honour

to Beppo Barracce that during his absence, I will not permit the visits of any guests—I said guests—male or female. So you see it will require some little ingenuity to defeat Beppo's plans, and get you and Camilla acquainted. If I were to impart to her my intention of seeing her by introducing you as a lover, she would instinctively shrink from such a proceeding and forbid it. When Camilla related to me her adventures after leaving Genoa, her capture by the Russian frigate, and her imprisonment with her father at Yenikale, she also told of her release by a gallant English officer, whom she never saw afterwards. I asked her yesterday, when I visited her at her residence at Sester, if she thought she would recognise the young officer that rescued her.'

"'Yes,' she replied, 'I certainly think I should, for his face was one not easily forgotten.'

"Do not blush, Percy," laughed the Coun-

tess; "you are too old and hackneyed in the world."

"I thank you, Laura, go on."

"Humph!" muttered the Countess. "So I said to Camilla, 'Oh! then, you had time to note his features?'

"'Yes. He carried me some distance in his arms and placed me on a sofa in some house, and he and an old woman busied themselves in recovering me. I soon became quite conscious, and spoke to him, and begged him to try and release my dear father. So, kindly soothing me, and telling me he would be sure to find him, he ran out, hearing some firing and shouting outside the house. I got to the window, and beheld him, in a scene of terrible confusion dash in amidst a lot of Russians; and he and his men, after a fierce fight, drove them all before them. But why do you ask me that question now, Laura?'

"'Because, *cara*, there is a naval officer here whom I have met at several parties, who

was at the taking of Yenikale, and who served under Captain Lyons, and I believe commanded the gun-boat the "Spitfire." '

"Camilla's colour brightened as she, with much vivacity, said, 'That is the name; I remember the officer shouting as he left me in the house, 'Spitfires fall in—gather together and charge them.' I suppose the Spitfires were the sailors of his ship.

"'I suppose they were,' I returned. So you see, Commander Percy Devereux, I have been paving the way for your appearance, and I have also hit upon a plan to bring you together without alarming the young Countess' delicacy."

"But, Laura," said Percy Devereux, seriously, "it appears to me that I shall run a very great risk of falling in love with this beautiful *protegée* of yours, with but a faint hope of succeeding in inspiring her, in so short a time, with the same feeling."

"Ah! never venture, never win; you have a strong claim on her gratitude, to begin

with, you saved her and her father from a perilous position, and from, perhaps, a long imprisonment. Besides, you are a cousin of mine, and that's something, for Camilla loves me dearly."

"Who would not?" said Percy, seriously.

"Now, my plan is this," continued the Countess; "when I am settled at Sester, with Camilla as my visitor, you must contrive to meet with an accident at my door."

Percy Devereux laughed.

"You mean, Laura, pretend to meet with a sprain, or something of the sort."

"Well, I do not exactly know the species of accident; it would be awkward, certainly, to break a leg and then make love upon crutches. But, seriously, you can do this—get a horse and ride along the road before my pavilion in Sester. I know you are a skilful, bold rider. When opposite the pavilion, make a show, as if your horse started, and come to the ground, and lie as if stunned; I will have you conveyed into the house."

"Ah! Laura," said Percy, laughing, "you are cheating the—excuse me."

"No, no," returned Laura, with a smile, "I am only outwitting a Jesuit, and in a good cause.'

"But I shall never look like an invalid. It would be rather curious if I broke some of my ribs for the express purpose of getting a rib; eh?"

"Percy, you are incorrigible, and I fear you never will be in love."

"Oh! by Jove, won't I! You shall see," returned the sailor.

"Well, then, mind my instructions," said the Countess. "This is Tuesday; on Friday morning—"

"Excuse me," interrupted Percy Devereux, "Friday is, by all sailors, considered an unlucky day to sail on."

"Nonsense! Percy; you are not going to sail, but to ride. So mind, on Friday, at twelve o'clock, you must be riding along the

road to Sester. You know my residence—the road passes under the terrace of my pavilion or summer-house in the grounds. We shall be there. You manage, as I said, to get a fall, or slip skilfully off your horse; leave the rest to me."

"I must put some chalk in my pocket," said Percy, "and rub it over my face, for, unfortunately, I cannot get up a pale face."

"I am afraid I shall have a deal of trouble with you," laughed the Countess, pouting; but Percy Devereux became serious, and persuaded his fair cousin that he would manage matters famously.

So they parted on amicable terms, and our hero left the Castiglioni Palace to return to his hotel, muttering to himself,

"I must get up sufficient resignation to lie on a sofa for three or four days, with my leg propped up, and sop, gruel, perhaps the wing of a chicken, or an ortolan for dinner—no physic, I hope. Faith! it's a pleasant idea,

though, to be nursed by a charming widow and a beautiful young Countess; they shall see how gracefully I can fall."

As our hero did not wish that his worthy valet should know anything about his movements for the next fortnight, on reaching his hotel he summoned Philips to his presence.

"I am going to explore the west coast, Phillips, and shall probably be absent a fortnight or so. I shall go alone, so just go to a horse dealer's and purchase me a good roadster, and a small leather valise, to carry a change of shirts, stockings, and a few articles of the toilet. Get a second-hand saddle and bridle—I dislike new ones—and then bring him here and put him up in the stables."

Phillips was a discreet young man, who always obeyed the very best of masters, never asked questions, or made observations. He at once proceeded to a well-known horse dealer. Horses were scarce in Genoa. Dealers brought them from Turin and Milan. This

was before the Italian campaign. After that they were scarcely to be had at any price.

"What kind of a horse do you require?" said the dealer, eyeing Tom Phillips from head to foot, calculating how much he might venture to clap on his horses to his English customer. But Tom looked knowing. "Your master's an Englishman. Ah! *per Baccho!* He can ride well, I dare say."

"You are not far out," replied Tom Phillips, who spoke Italian tolerably well. "He can ride. I never saw the horse he could not ride. It was my master who mastered the Marquis Durazzo's Arabian."

"*Cospetto!*" returned the dealer; "then I will sell him a horse not to be matched in Genoa, and, for the matter of that, in either Turin or Milan."

Tom went back to the hotel, and in half an hour the dealer arrived with the horse, and Percy went into the court-yard to see him.

"Come," he said, "that's a remarkably

handsome and powerful horse;" he spoke to his valet in English. "If he is sound, wind and limb, he's worth a hundred guineas if he's worth a shilling."

After carefully examining the horse, he looked at the dealer, and said,

"I do not see anything the matter with him; five years old, eh?"

"Yes, sir; he's as sound as a bell; first rate paces, and can take a fence like a deer. I won't deceive you, sir," continued the dealer, "for you look like a signor as could cross a good horse. This one is well known in Genoa, for no one can ride him."

"You are an honest dealer in horse flesh," replied our hero, laughing.

"He's worth a hundred Napoleons, sir; but I'll sell him for forty; and if you can ride him, he's the cheapest horse in Europe."

"Oh! I can ride him. I see by his eye that he has plenty of spirit. Perhaps he shies."

"You have hit it, sir, he does shy—no mis-

take. He has not a blemish but that; but he throws every man. I never saw a man as could ride him three miles."

"He will just suit me," said Devereux. "I will take him at your own price. Put a saddle and bridle on him, Phillips. I will try him."

The dealer rubbed his head and looked at our hero, and with a demure expression, said,

"Well, sir, I hope you may like him. If I have to take him back, for no one else in Genoa will buy him, I can give but twenty-five Napoleons for him.

Devereux laughed heartily.

"Well, that's all fair to state that beforehand. You will not, however, have to take him back, though your charge of fifteen Napoleons for an hour's ride and a chance of a fall is *troppo, caro.*"

Percy paid the dealer, changed his garments, and then mounted his new purchase. He rode through the city, out through the west gate, and along that most beautiful road,

with the beautiful blue sea on the left, and a range of palaces on the right, each fit for the residence of a prince; and yet this was only the suburb of San Pietro D'Arena.

On his way he passed a military detachment, with its band, drums beating, colours flying; but the horse evinced but little emotion or signs of fear; neither did the railway train startle him; his paces and action were admirable.

"He's a splendid horse, and worth sending to England," thought our hero, as, satisfied with the trial, he retraced his way to Genoa, his mind fully occupied with the strange adventure he was about to embark in.

In passing across the square of Aqua Verde, he stopped to speak to a French cavalry officer, with whom he had made acquaintance. Like most Frenchmen who can speak a little English, he preferred showing his proficiency in English to addressing

Percy Devereux in French, which he spoke fluently.

"*Diable!*" said Captain Le Garde, "eh, *mon Dieu!* You ride dat debble of a horse?"

"Yes," returned Percy. "I bought him, and like him very much."

"Ah! *sacre!* so I did buy him four months ago; he pitch me four times, and, *sacre!* I no ride bad; but that *sacre diable*, he beat me; and I sell him again to the *sacre bleu* of a dealer fifteen Napoleons less. So *trop cher*, *ma foi!*"

Our hero laughed, saying,

"When I bought him, Captain, I knew that he was likely to shy and be troublesome; but he has shown me no vice of any kind to-day."

"Ah! *par bleu! Mon amie*, dat is his vay; he real debbil; he wants you to tink him a mutton, I mean a lamb, and den when no tink nothing, he give one terribly jump off de ground and turn round, so queek, dat

no possible sit on him; so you look out, *mon ami*, he sure to play his debble trick!"

Assuring the cavalry officer that he would take care, Devereux said good bye and they parted.

CHAPTER V.

On the appointed Friday morning, Percy Devereux mounted his horse, with a neat valise strapped behind his saddle, and took the road to Sester. It was a very beautiful day, with a strong westerly breeze ruffling the sea, and curling the short waves with snowy crests. Passing along the suburb of San Pietro and crossing the torrent of the Tolchiveya, over a noble bridge, our hero rode on, immersed in thought. He remarked that several times the horse evinced signs of considerable uneasiness, throwing back his ears, and breathing with a kind of snort.

"Ah!" thought the rider, "you have, as

my friend Le Garde said, something of 'de debbel' in you, but you had better take it easy."

The road to Sester de Ponenti traverses the whole way along the sea coast and through the picturesque village of Pagia. Beyond Sester, is Voltri, a large town. Though Sester, from its position on the side of a charming hill, is protected from all the blasts from the north, Voltri, scarcely three miles distant, is subject to the most violent gales from the north, tossing the waters of that stormy gulf into foam, whilst Sester, at the same moment,enjoys an atmosphere equal to the climate of Madeira.

"Now, suppose," reflected Percy Devereux, communing with his own thoughts. "Suppose I do become desperately enamoured of this young and lovely Countess? Should unforseen circumstances separate us for life, am I not sowing the seeds of an unhappy passion? Again, supposing a mutual affection takes place, how are we to proceed. I must carry

off my lady love, that's all I can do." He was approaching the appointed spot. He looked at his watch and found he should be there to the exact time. As he entered upon the road leading to the pavilion, where he expected to see the Countess and her *protegée*, he felt considerable excitement, and a little agitation. He freed his feet from the stirrups, intending to make his horse rear, and then he would slip rapidly to the ground; there was a very strong breeze from the sea, blowing right in his face; he could see two females in white robes on the terrace of the pavilion, and just as he arrived nearly under it, and was looking up, a blue scarf held by the Countess was seized by a violent gust of wind; the next moment it was blown right across the horse's eyes, causing the animal to rear, and giving a tremendous spring upwards and twisting round, fall upon his side, throwing Percy Devereux, who had loosened his feet from the stirrups and his hand from the bridle, with great violence to the ground.

There was now no need of feigning illness, for his head came with considerable violence against a projecting rock in the bank, rendering him perfectly senseless and to all appearance dead.

How long he remained insensible, he could not say, but when he did recover and open his eyes, and became conscious of what was going on, he gazed round him with considerable curiosity,notwithstanding the severe pain he felt. He perceived that he was reclining on a sofa in a noble and elegant saloon. The Countess Castiglioni was baththing his temples with some pungent essence, and by her side stood a young lady, pale as a lily, and greatly agitated, holding a bowl. At that moment, he thought he had never beheld so lovely a countenance. Two or three female attendants were moving about the room, seemingly, trying, to be of use, but doing nothing, except bringing all kinds of articles totally useless for the occasion.

"God be praised!" exclaimed the Countess,

with a sigh of relief, when she perceived Percy open his eyes, and a slight flush come to his cheek. "He was only stunned."

Hearing the Countess's words, our hero made an effort to rouse himself, at the same time letting his eyes rest upon the young maiden, but the effort gave him intense pain, and before he could utter a sentence, the doctor the Countess had sent for, and who resided in the town, entered the room.

The young lady immediately retired, whilst the Countess whispered, stooping over the sofa, "I got a horrible fright, Percy. I can never forgive myself; but I trust in God no bones are broken?"

"Do not be uneasy, Laura; I have no bones broken, but I am likely to have a heart ache."

"Hush!" returned the Countess, and the doctor approached.

"By Jove!" muttered our hero, as the Countess retired, "I shall not want to play the part of the 'Malade Imaginaire.' I've

broken my collar bone to a certainty," and this the worthy doctor declared to be the case, besides having received sundry bruises, and a sprained ancle.

"Pretty well, I think, doctor?" said Percy Devereux.

"Might have been much worse, for if you had had the knock you had on the back of head, on the temple, you would not have needed my services."

The doctor, with the aid of one of the male domestics, set the collar bone, bandaged the ancle, and then Devereux was assisted, or rather carried, to the bed-room prepared for him, to which was attached a charming little saloon.

"With such a constitution and frame as yours," said the doctor, "you will be as well as ever in three weeks."

"I am not going to stop three days in bed doctor, let alone three weeks; why, God bless you, my worthy friend, on board ship,—I'm a sailor,—we are accustomed to be knocked

about, and take such mishaps as matters of course."

The doctor smiled, looked at the powerful leg he had just bandaged with considerable admiration, and then said, as he retired. "I can very well imagine, Signor, that it will not be easy to keep you in bed, but really you must not use your leg without the support of a crutch."

Devereux laughed.

"By Jove!" he said to himself, "a new way to begin love making, on crutches. That confounded horse played me a nice trick. I wonder what has become of him." A domestic was fidgeting about the room, unsettling and then settling everything that came in his way. Percy said, addressing the man,

"Pray, what has become of my horse?"

"He's in the stable, sir, not at all hurt; broke the pommel of the saddle; rather a vicious beast, sir, though a handsome animal. I saw the start he gave, sir; I was in the garden."

"I was not attending to him," said our hero, "and had my feet out of the stirrups."

That evening the Countess and Camilla Baracco were seated in their favourite saloon; the children had, with the greatest difficulty, been restrained from bursting into Percy Devereux's chamber. The little girl ceased talking when she saw her favourite lying senseless on the sofa, whilst the boy said "mamma should have the wicked horse shot." They had retired to rest, and the two countesses sat employed in some fancy needlework. Whether their thoughts employed them, or there was a certain awkwardness in the Countess Castiglioni's situation respecting the introduction of Percy Devereux as an inmate into her family, but for several moments after the children had retired, neither uttered a word. At last the Countess looked up, and into the thoughtful features of her companion, and said,

"I am afraid, Camilla, that this sad accident to my cousin Devereux has startled

you; at all events it has robbed your cheek of its roses."

"I confess I was terribly frightened, Laura, for I thought the gentleman was killed. If I had known it was this cousin you have been so attached to from childhood, I should have felt much more; but, thank God, there is not much danger to be apprehended."

"My scarf did the mischief," said the Countess; "and I now understand the horse he rode is notorious in Genoa for its capabilities of throwing its riders, though I know Percy Devereux to be a most skilful horseman. He was looking up at the pavilion, and was riding carelessly, and the horse fell; but, depend upon it, he will not let himself be confined to bed. He will be up to-morrow."

"I shall go home to sleep, Laura, till he goes," said Camilla, "and return in the morning to breakfast."

"Well, you can do so, dear, if you wish. It's only a walk across the garden and

through the orange grove. I have put my cousin in your room, and thus your favourite saloon will be occupied. He will not be able to return to Genoa for some days. I hope you will have no objection to my introducing my cousin to you, especially when I mention that he is the naval officer I spoke about the other day, as having been at the taking of Yenikale."

Camilla dropped her work, whilst a bright colour rushed to her cheek and temple, as she exclaimed,

"Then it was no freak of my fancy, Laura. I was afraid you would laugh at me if I mentioned it; but when I obtained a clear view of your cousin's face and features, I started and felt a tremour come over me. I thought I beheld the English officer who rescued me from the Russians at Yenikale. But can it be possible that my gallant preserver and your cousin are one and the same person?"

"Such is the fact, *cara*," said the Countess. "Strange things come to pass in this world

of ours, and this is one of them. But that he should have been nearly killed at my door, and in my presence, is quite as extraordinary, is it not?" and the Countess looked the young girl inquisitively in the face.

Camilla Barracco had no suspicion that the Countess was in any way implicated in the catastrophe.

"It was certainly singular," she replied; "but I think the cause of the accident was owing to your scarf, snatched from your hands by the sudden gust of wind, and blown into the horse's face. The horse, you say, is well-known for its viciousness?"

"No doubt," returned the Countess, quite pleased; "why, that horse is notorious for its escapades. But Percy Devereux is a bold and skilful horseman. He says he had his feet out of the stirups, and the reins were on the horse's neck. The start was so sudden, he could recover neither, and the horse fell."

"How strange that he should fancy to ride a beast so notorious," observed Camilla.

"My dear," returned the Countess, "men always delight in overcoming difficulties. Percy, I dare say, heard of this horse's wicked tricks, and, proud of his horsemanship, bought the animal."

Late in the evening Camilla was escorted home to the Barracco Palace by the Countess's own attendant.

As Camilla, in a very thoughtful mood, entered her own chamber, she was met by a very pretty, interesting young girl.

"Ah! Marcella, when did you come back? I expected you yesterday."

"Indeed, my lady," replied the girl, with an increase of colour, "I was very nearly never coming back. Did not the Countess Castiglioni tell you what happened to me?"

"No, indeed," said Camilla, looking into the young girl's face, as she seated herself to unrobe for the night, assisted by Marcella, "though the more I look at you, you appear pale, and not looking as well as when you left."

"Indeed, my lady, I was very nearly being drowned yesterday."

"Drowned!" repeated our heroine, "good gracious! what brought you into such a situation?"

"Indeed, I ought not to have been tempted to go out in a boat; but the day was so fine, I let myself be persuaded to join in a party to sail round the harbour, and see the beautiful schooner yacht of the English Milor. The water was quite smooth, and we were all chatting and laughing, when, oh! Madonna! a frightful squall of wind fell upon the sails of the boat, and over she went. Oh! blessed saint! shall I ever forget it? I sank, then came up, choking, and a noise like thunder in my ears and brain, and then sank again, and would have been drowned, but I was seized by the hair of the head and dragged up. I was, however, insensible. When I recovered, I found I was held in the arms of a man dripping wet; and then people came

up in boats, and I was lifted, quite bewildered, into a waterman's boat and carried ashore."

"I trust there was no one drowned," said the Countess, anxiously.

"No, my lady; thanks to the Madonna, they were all saved, having clung to the boat when she went over. In the evening a grand handsome signor came to my grandfather's house to inquire how I was, and then I learned I had been saved by the English Milor, who owns the fine yacht."

"How singular!" exclaimed Camilla, with an increase of colour on her cheek, "the very signor who saved your life is now lying severely hurt by a fall from his horse, just as he was riding past the pavilion in the Countess's garden, which you know overlooks the road running along the sea beach."

"Oh! blessed Madonna!" exclaimed Marcella, clasping her hands. "I am so grieved, my lady. He is the handsomest man I ever saw, and so gentle and kind in his manner. I shall pray for his recovery, my lady, every

night and morning. Did you see him, my lady?"

"Yes," returned Camilla, finishing her toilet for the night, "and I will pray for his recovery also; for many years ago, when I was a little girl, he saved my life also; at all events he rescued my dear lamented father and myself from some very savage Russians, who were dragging us off into captivity."

The Genoese maiden, as she finished her duties for the night and left the chamber, said to herself,

"Then I am sure my beautiful young mistress will fall in love with this handsome English Milor. Oh! Madonna! what a handsome couple they would make. But that odious Signor Beppo Barracco, wants to make my mistress a nun. If I was my lady, I would just run off with this handsome Signor at once."

The Countess Castiglioni passed several hours of the night in a somewhat perplexed train of thought. So far she had succeeded

in bringing the two young people acquainted, and Percy Devereux was an inmate of her mansion ; still there were tremendous difficulties to be overcome.

The next day, when she visited the chamber of the invalid, she found the room untenanted, and entering the saloon, to her amazement, beheld Percy reposing on the sofa, and the remains of a very substantial breakfast spread on the table before him.

"Why, good gracious, Percy !" exclaimed the Countess, gazing earnestly into his face. "The doctor left word that you were to remain perfectly quiet, till he came."

"Ah ! my dear Laura, your worthy doctor never had a British tar under his care before. Can you for one moment believe that we sailors could, under any circumstances, remain quiet and drink slops for a mere tumble from a horse's back ! I'm not mad, but by Jove ! I'm desperately inclined to be in love; but Cupid on crutches is not inviting, and this ill-starred leg of mine will force me to use one."

"Well, I trust you are not doing wrong, and that you have no fever."

"Fever! By Jove! look at the remains of my breakfast, feel my hand. I'm as cool and comfortable as you could wish. Yours is a very charming hand," continued Percy Devereux, imprinting a kiss on the fair small hand of his cousin, "and if you can only secure for me the reality of the beautiful vision I saw yesterday by your side, I'm your debtor for life."

"Ah!" said the Countess, with a pleased smile, "I knew how it would be. But you ought not to have sprained your ancle. First impressions go a great way, and a lover on a pair of crutches—Hem! I really do not know what to say to it."

Just then in walked the Signor Venni. He started back when he beheld his patient, and then cast a look at the demolished fowl and tongue.

"You have a most unruly patient, doctor, I fear," said the Countess, laughing. "Sailors

are the most mercurial creatures in the world, and my cousin is, I assure you, one of the worst of those amphibious animals."

"You must really pardon me, doctor," interposed Percy Devereux, holding out his hand to the worthy physician, who, feeling his pulse, laughed.

"There's not much amiss, Signor, but at all events keep quiet till your collar bone sets, and use a crutch till the sprain subsides, and you will do well enough. I shall not restrict you to diet."

"Ah!" interrupted our hero, "you would just suit one of my old captains. He always allowed his sick and wounded to have what they liked. My blue jackets are not accustomed to pills and bolusses, mutton broth, and chicken-whey, and, in fact, though some few died, others recovered. There was a fair balance; at all events, there was less medicine used aboard the old A—— than any ship in her Majesty's service."

After the Signor Venni took his leave, the Countess said,

"But do you not suffer pain, Percy, from your bruises? You gave us a horrible fright. I never shall forget how stupified we both were when we saw you lying as it were dead on the road, for I saw plain enough the fall was no act of your own. But what could induce you to select that abominably vicious horse? He threw my groom into the pond this morning, as he rode him to water; luckily he only got ducked."

Percy laughed.

"He's a remarkable fine horse, Laura, and my fall was all my own fault. I wanted to come to the ground gracefully, but do you know it's the best thing that could have happened. I should have made a most wretched pretended invalid; but tell me, what does your beautiful friend think?"

"Think?" returned the Countess, with a wicked smile; "why, that you are a very

careless rider, and that a tall man like you will look very awkward on crutches; and, by the bye, it puts me in mind that I must get one or two made, for I have not got a stock of those articles on hand. Ah! do you hear the children; they are frantic to come in and see you."

"Let them in by all means. I cannot romp with them, but I can talk to them; what a charming room you have given me possession of—such a splendid view, and what exquisite taste in the pictures and other articles; this must be your favourite room."

"No, it is Camilla's when she remains here with me. I must let the children in, but they must not be allowed to jump into your arms as usual."

The door was then opened, and in rushed the two beautiful children of the Countess, who held them forcibly back.

Percy, however, insisted on kissing his favourite, and after asking a number of questions, and promising them faithfully to be

well in a few days, and ramble all over the grounds with them, they consented to retire.

After a long conversation with the Countess relative to Camilla and the best way of proceeding, now that the first difficulty was overcome, Percy Devereux was left alone to indulge in the many fancies and projects that filled and occupied his brains.

CHAPTER VI.

Whilst the events related in the preceding chapter were taking place, the "Wild Gazelle" lay tranquilly alongside the jetty in the arsenal of Genoa, unto which the English yacht was warped, by special permission, to be painted, her rigging set up, and various little repairs executed, after her long and stormy voyage in the Black Sea.

The nominal commander of the yacht in Commander Devereux's absence, was an old man-of-war's man, formerly a master's mate in the Royal Navy, and who had served in the same ship in which our hero, then a lieutenant, also sailed. He was a fine-looking man, but with

only one arm, having lost the other in action. The first mate was also an old quarter-master in the navy, but still hale and vigorous; four of the crew were young men who had served in the Crimean war, in the gun brig, "Spitfire;" the rest were fine active young fellows, selected from the merchant service. They all loved their commander, especially those who had served under him in war time.

The morning after Percy Devereux's expedition to Sester, Thomas Phillips, his valet, came on board the yacht. The crew were busy setting up some new rigging, and Mr. Blowhard, the nominal captain, was walking the deck.

"Ah! Phillips," said the old tar, holding out his only fin, "how's the wind with you? how's the commander?"

"He's off for a land cruise, Mr. Blowhard; he started yesterday on horseback, for what you would call a cruise along shore."

"Ah!" said the sailor, looking aloft, "I never, no how, could manage them there

crafts. I have tried them often for a short cruise, but blow me! if I ever could hold on; there's nothing forrad you see, to pick a fellow up, if the craft dips; so I generally found as how I came over the bows in a head sea; these four-legged craft generally heave up the stern, as if struck by a sea aft, and so, having no rigging to hold on by, blow me! I got capsized. How long will your master be on his cruise?"

"He talked about a fortnight," said the valet.

"Ever a petticoat in the wind, Master Phillips?" asked the sailor, looking knowing, and giving the valet a punch in the ribs that took away his breath for a second or two. "Lord love you, he was a broth of a boy for the bunting. Come down and have a bit of dinner and a glass of grog, and I'll spin you a yarn of how I lost my poor fin. Ah! those were not jolly days—little or no fighting, bad feeding, and no prizes worth taking. Come, heave a-head, now, boy," turning to a smart

lad of fifteen, "and stir up the cook, and let us have a look at the contents of his coppers."

"Aye, aye, sir, I'll pitch into him—it's hungry weather."

"Blow me if I ever knew when it wasn't with you youngsters."

Phillips was a favourite on board the "Gazelle," and during the absence of his master always messed with Blowhard and the first mate. Having finished their dinner, and grog being the order of the day, the first mate came down to join the party.

"Now, Mr. Blowhard," said Phillips, "I want a good yarn. I'll mix the punch, and here's pipes," and unlocking a cupboard, he took out some of his master's stock of tobacco and placed it on the table.

"Aye, aye, mate, I'll spin you a yarn," returned old Blowhard, tasting the mixture, and giving Phillips an approving nod.

"This time I'll take you to the Baltic, where our blessed blue jackets had such splendid chances of gaining honours and pro-

motion, and yet did nothing, as we may say. You see, as here in England we thought as little of the Rooshans as we would of babies, and thought as how their forts were made of gingerbread, and as easily demolished, but we found them made of granite, and didn't like trying if we could knock them about their ears.

"The ships seemed very formidable, stretched in a line before Cronstadt, which looked grim and defying at us, and after a time, our blue jackets felt satisfied that that was all they would have an opportunity of seeing. At this time I was master's mate aboard the "Cossack." She was commanded by one Captain Fanshaw. We were cruising about picking up useless vessels and breaking them up for firewood, using the timber instead of coals, when Admiral Dundas sent us seven or eight Russian prisoners, with orders to put them on shore.

"Our craft was a screw corvette of twenty-one guns—a smartish craft, and well-manned

—and though our worthy commander got afterwards blamed for acting in a careless manner, and sacrificing lives uselessly, we aboard the 'Cossack' knew better.

"At this time we were off a place called Hango. So the corvette stood in pretty close, and then anchored; and the boat being launched, a party was selected to take these Rooshians ashore. We all liked the spree, as we thought we might have a lark some way or other with the natives. Our ship had no flag of truce flying at this time, but one was put into the boat and hoisted.

"In the boat was our Lieutenant Geneste, our ship's surgeon, myself, and three or more stewards. Our prisoners were mostly chaps as called themselves Fins; one of them a captain of a ship. Our stewards wanted to see if any provisions could be got.

"Between the ship and the place where we intended landing our prisoners, there were several small islands, so that we lost sight of the ship before reaching the quay. We had

our white flag flying, though there was very little wind ; enough, however, to blow it out, and to shew those Rooshan savages as how it wasn't a red flag.

" As we came in sight of the landing place, not a soul was to be seen ; there were a range of rocks and some houses about a hundred yards from the sea, and towards them we went and ran the boat ashore, close to the landing place.

" Our three officers sprung ashore ; one, Lieutenant Geneste, took the flag of truce and, unfurling it, walked on to the houses. Most of our men remained in the boat, but I and Tom Draper came straggling after our officers with baskets to put any prog we might get hold on. We hadn't gone fifty yards, when blow me! if we weren't a little startled by seeing two or three hundred Rooshians start up from behind the range of rock; and before you could say Jack Robinson, the cowardly lubbers raised their muskets, and took aim.

Our lieutenant roared out, 'Avast! ye land lubbers! don't you see the flag of truce?'

"'Flag of truce be ———!' said a Rooshian, in good English, and bang went a volley of balls at us. I saw one of our officers go down, and poor Tom Draper. I stood unhurt for a moment, confounded at such a cowardly act; just then those in the boat leaped ashore and ran towards us, and then two more volleys were fired; then down I went, with my left arm shattered, and as I saw they intended murdering us, and we could do nothing, I lay as if I was dead, whilst the bloody villains ran shouting to the boat. I had rolled over on my right fin, and could just see over the body of my poor comrade down to the boat. These ruffians of Rooshans then fired several volleys into the boat, killing all in her, and shouting and cursing, like devils, as they were; they then plundered the boat, and made prisoners of those who remained alive—but to my horror

I saw them pitch the bodies overboard—and then they dragged a seaman up on to the wharf, and then I seed the poor fellow stagger, and I then saw it was a comrade named Henry Gibbons; what he said I don't know, but three of the Rooshians rushed at him and bayonetted him, and pitched him over the wall. Ah! how my blood boiled! but Lord love ye! I was helpless—I was suffering agony, for my arm was shattered to pieces below the elbow, and only hanging on by the skin and sinews. As I saw them coming towards us, I lay on my face, and never stirred as they passed me; some villain gave me a kick in the ribs, and laughed, saying something to his comrades; another struck me with the butt of a musket. Still, I lay still. After a time I ventured to look round, and then I found they had marched off with all the wounded, leaving the dead where they lay. There was a thin grey mist at this time creeping over the ground, and presently it shut out from my sight the rocks and the

houses. I felt sick and faint, but I still had pluck and strength enough left to crawl towards the boat, and at last I got into her, and there I found four dead comrades lying along the bottom; she was afloat, and her sides riddled with shot, but all luckily above water. I sat quiet awhile, to recover from my faintness, but suddenly hearing voices on shore coming towards the quay, with my right fin I cast off the painter, and, with one oar, had just strength to push off into the tide-way, which luckily ran strong out. I could hear the bloody Rooshians shouting, though I could not see them for the fog, but the villains fired several shots in my direction; one musket ball by chance struck the oar I was sculling with, and knocked several splinters out of it. I was not able, with my shattered arm and loss of blood, you see, to scull very much; so I sat down and looked with a wistful eye at my poor murdered messmates, only hoping that I might live to reach the 'Cossack,' and that the commander would take a glorious revenge. As I drifted out to

sea the fog lifted ; it was at this time about three or four o'clock, and I saw I was drifting on one of the small islands ; so I took to sculling again with one oar to avoid getting on shore, and just as I was fainting from the exertion, and just turned the end of the island, I saw the 'Cossack's' cutter pulling towards me. I had just strength to give a cheer, and then blow me, if I didn't faint off as neatly as ever any fine lady did, falling on the dead bodies of my messmates.

"When I recovered I found myself in the cockpit of the 'Cossack,' and after taking a draught from the surgeon, and getting life into me, I told them my story. The surgeon then cut off my arm above the elbow, and that wasn't pleasant, by no means ; howsomever, it saved my life, although I was minus a fin. So that's the way, Mister Phillips, I lost my arm."

"But bless me," said the valet, "did you let those cowardly rascals off without peppering their jackets ?"

"Well, I have not much to say about that," replied the sailor. "Our captain was furious and no mistake, and shoved our craft within five hundred yards of the place, and opened a heavy fire upon it; but they never returned a shot, and the fog came on again. So the 'Cossack' got under weigh again, and anchored in a safe place; I wasn't but a few days confined below, for I was rather a tough chap; but we heard some short time after, to our great joy, that Lieutenant Geneste and our doctor were not dead, but were prisoners, and that of the Rooshian prisoners we went ashore to release, two were killed and one wounded; and also that the Rooshians said it was all our fault. Blow me! I thought this too bad, and in England I heard that our gallant captain was blamed; but I knows right well that the Rooshians told a —— lie, and so let it be."

"It cost you your arm, anyhow, Mr. Blowhard," said Phillips, "and that was bad enough; but where did you fall in with my

master? I never heard how he got away from the Russians, after being taken prisoner by the crew of some ship of war, at some outlandish place in the Black Sea."

"Oh! bless me, I knows what place you mean, Mr. Phillips," replied the master of the yacht. "That was the only gallant exploit of the Rooshian navy, and, blow me! if that 'ere ship was not a good one. She was called the 'Vladmir.' She got out of Sebastopol, in spite of our fleet, cruised along the shores of the Black Sea, sunk several vessels, burnt others, and got back safe and sound into her old berth. Ah! he was a good and a bold seaman, her commander. Another time, Mr. Phillips, I'll spin you a better yarn than the one I have just told you. Now I must go and see after some stores. When do you expect our commander back?"

"Well, I can't say, Mr. Blowhard; he may be a fortnight, but not longer; for his stock of clothes won't hold out longer."

CHAPTER VII.

Percy Devereux, in the meantime, rapidly recovered; his broken collar bone and bruises ceased to pain him, but he fairly lost his heart to the beautiful and amiable Camilla Barracco. It required but little entreaty to induce the fair Genoese to accompany the Countess into the little saloon, generally occupied by herself when on a visit to her dearest and most-loved friend.

As the deliverer of herself and father from captivity and, possibly, persecution, Percy Devereux was at once acknowledged as a friend. A few days increased the intimacy into a feeling of sincere regard in Camilla,

and into a fervent love in the heart of our hero.

When able to leave his room and wander through the beautiful grounds of the Countess's villa, this feeling of friendship in the breast of Camilla rapidly ripened into a first love in her young heart, almost unknown to herself. Percy, by the express wish of the Countess, had sent for his valet, and for many articles of clothing he required. Camilla each night retired to her own mansion, and returned to breakfast at the villa. With the happy children accompanying them, they rambled along the sea shore, up the flower-clad hills of Sester, and through the beautiful shrubbery of Palazzo Barracco, the grounds belonging to the latter place being exceedingly extensive, and beautifully and tastefully laid out in the English style.

Thus a fortnight passed, like a dream to Percy, but a dream that influenced all his after life.

Our hero was not a man to fall violently

in love with a merely beautiful face. He had seen many in his rambles over the world —some as beautiful as Camilla Barracco, but none whose manner, voice, and conversation so spoke to the heart. His was not the love of extreme youth—he was nearly eight-and-twenty. And now that he loved, he loved with all the devotion and fervour of a somewhat romantic and enthusiastic disposition. Fourteen days appears but a very short time for a woman to surrender her often priceless heart; but Camilla, young as she was, had strangely retained a strong remembrance of her preserver; and when again she beheld him, his fine and handsome person and intellectual features, added to extremely prepossessing manners, rapidly changed gratitude and friendship into a much warmer sentiment.

For many reasons the Countess thought it better that Percy Devereux should return to Genoa after the fortnight had expired, and he could use his leg as well as ever. The Signor

Barracco had written to his steward, stating that he should be detained in his mission for a few weeks longer, so the Countess said he could continue his visits daily to her villa, and thus his declaration of love to the fair Countess might be postponed for a while, and not shock her somewhat timid nature by so very sudden a declaration.

Devereux, therefore returned to Genoa on his recent purchase, notwithstanding all the Countess could say. She considered the horse as an untameable, savage brute. He had thrown two of her grooms, and they both declared the vicious beast was possessed by an evil spirit.

The sagacious beast, however, soon found out that he had got a master at last, and after two or three sharp contests, he gave up trying to master his rider, and daily master and horse might be seen proceeding in the most amicable manner along the road to Sester.

In Genoa, the handsome Englishman was set down by the dames and cavaliers as

the future intended of the fascinating Countess Castiglioni, and the Countess, to hide their own projects, allowed the public to think as it pleased. But the day at last came when those two gifted beings—Camilla and Devereux—acknowledged their mutual love for each other. Percy, overpowered with happiness, clasped the beautiful Camilla to his heart, and pressed the first kiss of love upon her glowing cheek. They were at this time seated on a rustic seat in one of the beautiful bowers in the villa gardens, commanding an unrivalled view over sea and land. The Countess, with her two children, had driven over to Voltri, purposely leaving the young couple to come to an *eclaircissement*, for time was rapidly speeding, and the Signor Barracco's return might be weekly expected.

After this mutual confession of affection, Camilla said, in her low, musical voice, which trembled with emotion,

"Have we not been rash, Percy? have we fairly considered the terrible obstacles that

still exist? Ah!" she continued, with a smile, as she looked into the face of her lover, "confess, now, this has been brought about by—"

"The feelings of our own hearts," interrupted Percy, kissing the small, fair hand he had detained captive in his. "Blessed with your love, my own Camilla, the obstacle you think so seriously of, is to me a thing of naught."

Scarcely had our hero pronounced these words, when the flowing branches of the honeysuckle were dashed aside, and a man burst through and stood before them, with his face inflamed by passion. Percy sprang from his seat, and the next moment he would have struck the man down, when Camilla, pale and agitated said,

"Hold, Percy; this gentleman is my uncle and guardian."

Commander Devereux let fall his hand, and gazed inquiringly into the face of the man, who held his and Camilla's destiny in his hands.

Giuseppe Barracco, almost powerless from rage, gazed fiercely from one to the other of the two lovers. His broad chest heaved with emotion, and his clenched hands shook with passion.

"So," said he, gazing at Camilla, "degenerate, weak, selfish girl, thank the God you have outraged, that I have arrived in time to save your body and soul from the snares of Satan. And you, sir," he continued, looking into the calm, undisturbed features of our hero, "abetted and shamefully aided by that false, perfidious, heretical woman, to whom, in my simple faith, I trusted this girl, devoted to her Saviour—you dared—"

"Hold, Signor Barracco," interrupted Percy, with a frown, but speaking calmly and earnestly, "I am not going to stand here and permit any man to pass insulting epithets upon a noble-minded woman."

"Pshaw!" burst from the lips of Camilla's infuriated guardian. "I say what I think. As to you, madame," turning to Camilla, "I

will take you for ever from the presence of one who has dared to pollute your ears—you, a child of God—with words of love," and he attempted to seize the maiden's hand, but Camilla drew herself proudly back, whilst our hero said, laying his powerful grasp upon the Italian's shoulder,

"Take care, sir, how you venture to apply words and epithets to me, that hereafter you may dearly repent. You are well aware that your niece's father was decidedly opposed to his daughter's becoming a nun, and you are also perfectly aware that her religious opinions, as well as her inclinations, are utterly repugnant to—"

With a terrible oath, the Signor Barracce, a slave to his temper, burst into one of those ungovernable fits of passion which rendered him, at times, almost insane. His features worked as if in a fit, while his cheeks and temples appeared as if all the blood in his body had rushed into them.

"Proud, accursed Englishman," burst from

his lips, "to you I owe this deadly stain upon an untarnished name. Die, accursed heretic, as you are!" and, drawing a pistol from his breast, he levelled it full in the face of the young man, before he could even dream of such an act. But Camilla, aware of her uncle's furious and ungovernable passion, and knowing that he always went armed, had watched his every motion with a steady and unshrinking eye. The moment he levelled the pistol, she, with a spring, threw his arm up, the weapon exploded, knocking off Devereux's hat, and singeing his cheek with the flame. At the same instant Percy grasped his opponent's wrist, for the pistol had four barrels, and with a terrible wrench, that extorted a groan of agony from the Italian, he tore the pistol from him, and hurled it far over the flowery scene before them.

One look of deep gratitude our hero cast into the pale features of his beloved, and then he coldly and bitterly said to the dismayed Barracco,

"So, Signor, you would play the assassin's part to gain your ends! I know your creed—no matter the means so the object is attained. But the laws of even this country will not permit one man to murder another with impunity; but from respect and gratitude to this dear girl," pressing her hand to his lips, "who shall yet, please God, despite your machinations, be my partner through life—"

"Never!" shouted the infuriated Italian. "Never! Sooner would I slay her with my own hand."

"Then, uncle," said Camilla, remaining by the side of her lover, "since thus you express your sentiments and determination, I will state mine. You have no right or power to treat your brother's child with such cruelty, and to insult her with such language, and I will place myself under the protection of the Countess Castiglioni, and let the law of the land decide between us. A nun I will never become. I am a Protestant, heart and soul, and to this gentleman I have pledged my

faith, and by this determination I will abide."

"And he to whom you have pledged this precious gift, dear Camilla," said Percy, with fervour, "will sacrifice life and property to secure you from oppression. Your guardian has forfeited all claim to your obedience, by his cruel insults and his unmanly and wanton aggression."

The Signor Barracco stood astounded—perfectly bewildered—gazing from one to the other. To be thus braved and thwarted by one he considered a mere child, and who he thought trembled at his presence, overpowered him; but Camilla's uncle had too much of the Jesuit in his nature to let himself be foiled by a girl, and her heretic lover.

Seeing our hero about to lead Camilla to the house, the Count stepped forward, saying in a calm, suppressed voice—

"Stay, niece, I beseech you. I have, I confess, acted the part of a madman and a coward. You well know that I am a slave

to passion and always deeply repent acts committed under its influence.

Then turning and looking into the thoughtful, serious features of Percy Devereux, he continued, in a contrite and humble manner—"Signor, I confess I deserve the humiliation and rebukes I have received. I have, in my insane passion, attempted to commit an act that if known will cover an honourable name with opprobrium. If you can forgive and forget, Signor, this terrible act of mine, and let me have time till to-morrow evening to consider over our relative positions and wishes, I will make ample restitution. I offer you now my humble apology, and to you, my niece, I offer the same. You can never say I denied you anything, or refused you a single indulgence, according to my creed and my belief. I believed you devoted and vowed to the service of Christ. Let me, then, pass this night in calm reflection, and to-morrow, if you still persist in your present intention, I will forego my guardianship, and

leave you. You are your own mistress, under the protection of the Countess Castiglioni."

The lovers looked at each other ; they were young, honourable, and confiding, and thus they became the dupes of the wily Italian's dissimulation.

"I accept your apologies, Signor," said Percy Devereux, "and I trust you will see, after some hours' reflection, that in justice to your niece's happiness, you will abandon, willingly, views impossible to be carried out in a Christian country, and in such a free and enlightened period. I have tendered her my heart, my hand, and my fortune. My name is an honourable one, and my portion ample; the Countess Castiglioni is my cousin. I neither covet nor desire this young lady's fortune; her hand and her love is all I have sought. If you consider that your church requires compensation in lieu of an unwilling victim, we freely offer you the fortune your niece is entitled to."

"You are generous, Signor, and most cer-

tainly I cannot impute to you mercenary motives in winning my niece's affection. To-morrow I shall be able fully to bring my mind to a clear understanding on this matter; and as I am most anxious that what has taken place may remain confined to our own breasts, you may be sure that what I shall propose will conduce to both your welfare and future happiness. I see the Countess's carriage coming up the avenue. I will therefore retire with my niece, and by this time to-morrow, you will give me credit for the measures I shall adopt."

Percy Devereux returned the profound salutation of the Signor Barracco, and kissing the hand of his beloved Camilla, bade her adieu till the next day.

The young girl looked pale, and her beautiful features wore a serious look, but she roused herself from her sombre thoughts, returned her lover's salutation with a sweet, affectionate smile, and a few words in a low voice breathing of hope and true affection.

CHAPTER VIII.

Percy Devereux stood gazing after the graceful form of her he so fondly loved, till she and her guardian disappeared behind the shrubbery that divided the grounds of the domains of the Countess and those of Barracco.

He remained some moments very thoughtful, and communing with himself.

"Have we, after all," he said, half-aloud; "have we done well to trust this Jesuitical Italian? I doubt if Camilla's first resolution, to place herself under the protection of the Countess, was not the safest. However, the time is past, even in this country, for forcing

unwilling victims into convents, and pronouncing vows abhorrent to their own feelings."

Full of deep and perplexing thought, he turned round, and perceived the Countess and the children alighting from the carriage and entering the mansion. He walked on, anxious to see his fair cousin, and relate to her the events of the last hour.

In the meantime the Signor Barracco proceeded through the grounds, followed in silence by his niece. Respect for her uncle, after witnessing his recent outrageous act against her lover, she could have none. Still, she felt no apprehension that he intended wilfully to deceive her, and that his pretended contrition was a deception, for whilst uttering the words, his heart was a prey to the fiercest passions. Hatred against the heretical Englishman, who had foiled him; vengeance against his niece, who had openly stated that she had renounced the creed of her fathers; and, above all, bitter resentment against the Countess Castiglioni, whom he conceived to be the

principal, if not the sole, instigator of the whole plot to deprive the church of its devotee.

Camilla, after all, knew but little of her uncle's real disposition and nature. In heart one of the most bigoted members of the Romish Church, his life had been passed in lamentation over the rapidly failing power of the Popedom. He firmly believed that his niece's soul was condemned for ever if she failed to fulfil her mother's vow, so solemnly registered before God ; and, worst of all, a union with a heretic filled his mind with horror. In his fury he had attempted to kill Camilla's lover, and had he done so, he would have gloried in it, for such was the then state of the Italian kingdom, did he flee into the Papal States, he would be joyfully received and protected, and the act looked upon as a just and righteous one. He would have placed his niece's wealth at the disposal of the Holy Father, who was just then very much in want of such offerings, and thus the

act of shooting a heretic would only be considered as a necessary deed in order to save a soul from perdition. Overpowered with such thoughts, Beppo Barracco, as soon as he entered his own private study, threw himself into a chair, and burying his face in his hands, remained for several minutes plunged in thought ; he then started up and rung his bell, and told the domestic who answered the summons to send his secretary to him.

In a few minutes a highly respectable-looking man, somewhat past middle age, entered the room and quietly closed the door, and then turning, he surveyed the Signor Barracco with an anxious and enquiring eye.

"Sit down, Servili," said Beppo Barracco; "I wish to speak to you on business of great importance. I shall have to leave this place with my niece immediately, and I shall also require you to accompany me."

The secretary sat down, and then the Signor Barracco pushed over to him two or three letters he took from a desk, saying,

"Copy those quickly!"

Taking some paper from a drawer, the secretary did so, neatly and rapidly, and then handed them to the Signor.

"Very good," said Barracco, beginning to fold them. "Now, the first thing you have to do is to go at once to Voltri, to the Hotel le Grande Duke; there you will find Captain Lotero, of the Polacca brig 'Bella Donna,' the vessel I came here in. You will give him this letter," taking up one of the letters, "and tell him it's all right; and that he must be ready for sea an hour before daybreak. Do not lose a moment, and mind—communicate with no one."

"You shall be obeyed, Signor," returned the secretary, putting the letter in his breast pocket, bowing and retiring.

Barracco then rose from his chair, saying to himself,

"There is little time to spare: now for this degenerate, deceiving girl; she thinks to outwit me, and that she and her accursed

heretical lover," and he laughed contemptuously, "will receive the benediction of Beppo Barracco, and that he will join their hands in holy wedlock,and retire penitent and reformed. *Benissimo!* we shall see."

Leaving the library, and proceeding through a corridor, and ascending a flight of marble stairs, he proceeded along a gallery, and opening a door, entered a small but exquisitely tastefully decorated and furnished saloon—his niece's private sitting-room—with a folding-door opening into the sleeping chamber. Camilla was seated at the open window—her beautiful head resting on her hand, her elbow upon the window-sill; she was gazing out, with a very serious expression of countenance, upon the rippling waters of the Gulf of Voltri; the sun was setting and its crimson rays played upon the waters and the white sails of the feluccas proceeding seawards.

Several vessels lay at anchor close in on the shingly beach before the town; but her

eyes rested—why she could not exactly say—upon a large and graceful-looking craft, lying further out in the bay; it was a long low vessel, with black sides, and tall, raking masts. This was the Polacca brig the "Bella Donna."

As she sat, full of thought, the sound of the opening door startled her from her reveries; were her thoughts golden dreams of the future, or did the shadows of coming troubles press upon her mind? Perceiving her uncle, Camilla rose,and,leaving the window,sat down on the sofa, near which her guardian had taken a chair. She could see by the expression of his features, contracted brow and stern, gloomy look, that the object of his visit would not be agreeable to her, or cause her to think well of his self communing concerning her future destiny. But Camilla was neither easily frightened nor depressed; she looked calmly into her uncle's face, and waited till he commenced the conversation.

For several moments Barracco remained silent. Did he fear the spirit and determina-

tion of his intended victim? Certainly, he appeared doubtful how to first address our heroine ; at length he said,

"I am come, Camilla, to inform you that most important business forces me to sail this night for Civita Vecchia in the vessel that brought me here."

Camilla started, but made no reply. The uncle watched his niece's truthful countenance, and, with a malicious satisfaction, perceived the impression his words had made. After a pause, he continued,

"Reflecting upon what has passed, I think it would be highly detrimental to your character to leave you unprotected here."

"I cannot perceive the necessity," interrupted Camilla, calmly, "of forcing me to undertake such a voyage. I can remain under the protection of the Countess Castiglioni."

"No doubt," said her guardian, bitterly; "such a protection as that false woman could give you, would facilitate the views of that mad Englishman and your own; but no scandal

shall be brought on the name of Barracco by—"

"You forget, Signor," interrupted Camilla, a little excited, "that your own conduct some hours ago has already disgraced an honourable name—not, I trust, any conduct of mine, or the honourable gentleman to whom I have pledged my faith."

"Insolent girl!" exclaimed her uncle, rising from his chair; "I see your purpose is to defy me. I will trouble myself no more in bandying words with you. You are my ward, and no one can deny my power over you—at all events, till you are eighteen years of age. I chose to take you to Civita Vecchia to-night, and to-night you shall accompany me on board the brig now lying in Voltri roads. Summon, therefore, your attendants, and commence packing whatever necessaries you shall require for a voyage, and a long stay in Rome;" and without another word he turned abruptly and quitted the saloon.

Though somewhat startled and greatly

indignant at the deceit and falsehood of her guardian, Camilla was far from dismayed. She had too much faith in her lover's affection, and also in his power to protect her; besides, she did not believe in the extent of her guardian's power, or that he could immure her in a convent without her consent.

Camilla little knew how powerful is the Romish church, and how unscrupulous its ministers in executing any project, the result of which would be conducive to its own interests.

The young Countess sat for some minutes in deep reflection upon the course she ought to pursue. She was aware whatever she determined must be promptly done, to thwart her guardian's projects. To be carried off to Rome would be a terrible calamity. To defeat this design she must find means, to communicate with the Countess Castiglioni and with Percy Devereux. In two or three hours the latter would be back in Genoa, trusting to the honourable intentions expressed by

Barracco. Thus she might be many miles across the broad waters of the Mediterranean, before her lover could hear of her treacherous uncle's doings. Even if she could get a few lines conveyed to the Countess Castiglioni, it could not prevent her being carried off, but it would inform her of her guardian's projects, and also let her know her destination was Rome. She therefore sat down to her writing desk, and wrote a rapid note to the Countess, when her female attendant, Marcella, hastily entered the room, flushed and agitated, and looking frightened.

"What has occurred, Marcella?" questioned our heroine, laying down her pen and folding up her note.

"Ah! Madonna, my lady," said Marcella, "I am terrified to death. Your uncle met me in the passage, and catching me by the arm, said, fixing his terrible eyes upon me, 'Hark ye, girl; go to your mistress's room and pack up some of her things, for we sail to-night for Civita Vecchia; and mind what I say: re-

main in your mistress's room; if I find you out of it, woe betide you. Go!' You may be sure, my lady, I did go, for the Signor always frightens me; but the blessed saints! my lady, what will become of us? What will your lover—I mean what will the Signor Devereux do? *Madre mi!* we are ruined. Antonio won't know, either, where I am gone!"

"You must contrive to leave the house, Marcella, and hasten with this note to the Countess."

"Madonna! Signora, every door is locked, and the keys with that horrid—I mean with your uncle, my lady."

Camilla looked dismayed.

"Ah! the Virgin be praised, I think I can out-wit him," exclaimed Marcella, clapping her hands. "I would do anything in the world to serve the noble Signor who saved my life."

"Well, Marcella, what's your plan?" asked Camilla, eagerly.

"Come into your bed-room, my lady, and

lower me out of the window into the garden."

"Why, it's many feet from the ground!" said Camilla.

"No matter, my lady; tie the sheets together, and I shall get down famously. I can, in the dark, clamber over the laurel hedge, out into the road, and make my way to the Countess."

Camilla thought a moment, and then said,

"It may be done, and there is no other way."

She even thought she might escape that way herself, but her innate sense of maidenly propriety forbade such an attempt. She therefore agreed to Marcella's proposal. Retiring to her bed-room, they locked the door, tied the sheets and counterpanes together, and fastened one end to the leg of a table they drew close to the window.

Marcella covered herself with a large shawl, and clambering up on the table, looked out. It was a dark, cloudy night; so

recommending herself to the care of the Madonna, she grasped the sheets, and began lowering herself from the window, resting her little feet upon the trellis work that ran round that side of the house.

Just as she thought her feet ought to touch the flower bed, she felt her legs grasped by a pair of hands, and a voice say,

"Hush! for the love of the Virgin!" but a faint shriek nevertheless escaped her lips.

Camilla, terrified, put her head out of the window, and a voice said,

"Do not be alarmed; take the light away, draw up the sheets, and close the window."

"Oh! Madonna!" cried Marcella, "who are you? Let go my legs, and I will drop down. I'm fainting!"

"Let go! I will support you," said the voice.

The next moment an arm encircled her waist, and she was placed on the gravel-walk; the sheets were drawn up, and the light disappeared.

"In the name of the saints, who are you?" asked Marcella, trying in the deep gloom to make out the man's face—but she could not. "I think your voice is familiar; what were you doing under my mistress' window?"

"The contrary of what you have done, my pretty Marcella. I was going up," said the stranger.

"Ah! how dare you; but I know you now, and I think you would serve my mistress rather than injure her."

"You are right, Marcella; I was going to tell her by climbing up to the window that she has a true friend, and she must not be afraid."

"Ah! Signor Servili, I knew you were a friend," said Marcella; "but why did you not let me drop down, and not take me by the legs."

"Because," said the Secretary, "your rope was short; you were six feet from the ground, and would have hurt yourself. But where were you going?"

"To the Countess' with a note."

"Ah! just the thing. I was going there myself, but I came to warn your mistress first. Your going will be far, far better, for I have just come back from Voltri; the vessel cannot sail till break of day. Take this letter, and tell the Countess if the Captain Devereux is gone to Genoa this must be sent at once to him, and be delivered into his own hands. Come, I will lift you over the laurel hedge, and let you through the private gate into the Countess' grounds, and then run through the garden to the house; the Signor Capitani may not be gone. Then come back here, and I will smuggle you into the house, for you must be with your mistress on board the brig."

"Ah! Madonna! must we go to sea? Better get my mistress out of the window."

"No, no; there would be scandal. I would have no slur on your noble mistress'

name. No more delay ; you can be back here in half an hour, can you not ?"

"Yes," returned Marcella, muttering to herself, "if some one else does not catch me by the legs."

Helping Marcella over, or rather through the laurel hedge, they crossed the second garden, and then Servili unlocked the iron gates in the high wall, and admitted her into the Countess Castiglioni's grounds.

"Now, Marcella, make haste, and mind and tell the Signor Devereux, if he is still at the villa, not to be rash ; to do as I have told him in my letter, and not to attempt force here, for the Signor Barracco has ten armed men guarding the house."

So saying, the Signor retired, leaving the iron door unlocked.

"Madonna !" muttered Marcella, as she pushed her way through the thick shrubberies, "it's frightfully dark ; I cannot make out the path."

Pushing violently through a tuft of evergreens, poor Marcella tripped, and to her amazement and terror, fell into the arms of a man, who very tenderly caught her up.

"Ah! Holy Mother! what will become of me this night? I'm doomed to—"

"Who are you," interrupted the stranger; "you have a very nice little waist, and a very pretty voice. What can a young maiden like you be doing here at this time of night?"

The tone of voice and the gentle manner of the stranger satisfied Marcella that the speaker was a gentleman. Gently releasing her waist from his arm, Marcella said, very demurely, "Pray, Signor, who are you? for I am going to the Countess de Castiglioni's mansion, and did not expect to meet any one on the grounds, and I am in great haste."

"Are you one of the Countess Barracco's attendants?" asked the stranger. "I suspect you are—perhaps your name is Marcella."

"Oh! blessed Madonna! you must be the noble gentleman who saved my life the other

day," exclaimed Marcella, considerably agitated,

"Yes, yes," said Percy Devereux, with a start; "and happy I am that I did so. Tell me, is there anything wrong with your mistress?"

Marcella, with tears in her eyes, took our hero's hand and kissed it, saying,

"I never saw you to thank you, noble signor;" but Percy Devereux, stooping, kissed the young girl's cheek, saying, "Let us go to the house; I know that there is something wrong. I suspect that smooth-tongued Jesuit has ensnared your mistress, and will play us false. I felt uneasy, and before leaving for Genoa resolved to observe how affairs were at the Barracco mansion. I have the key of the gate; and if you say there is any deceit practising against the Countess, I will go immediately and demand an interview with the Signor."

"No, no, no, Signor," cried Marcella, eagerly; "the saints forbid! If you went to

the house blood would surely be shed—the Signor Barracco has ten armed retainers in the mansion. Ah! there are the lights; we are close to the house. I have a letter for you, Signor, and one for the Countess, which will explain all, and how you are to act. Now I had better go back, for the Signor Servili told me to lose no time. I came out of a window, and he will meet me and smuggle me in again; so that I may be with my lady, and the Signor Barracco know nothing about my absence."

"Perhaps you are right, Marcella," returned Percy, taking the two notes; "tell your mistress to fear nothing—she shall be protected; and now, my pretty Marcella, cling to your mistress, and accept this from me, and when you wed Antonio the Lucky—and lucky he will be in earnest in having you for a wife—let this be worn on your bridal day in remembrance of me."

And unhooking a remarkably handsome and valuable Venetian worked gold chain

from his watch, he dropped it over her neck, and pressing her hand, hurried to the house.

Marcella stood for a moment bewildered.

"He's gone—he is a noble gentleman. The Madonna send I may see my beloved mistress the wife of this gallant Signor."

Marcella then hurried back, passed through the iron gate, and crossed the garden. All was still; she scrambled through the laurel hedge, and the next moment ran against Servili.

"Ah! *per Bacco!* you are back soon; did you deliver the letters, Marcella?"

"I did, and to the captain himself. I met him in the shrubbery coming here."

"Ah! *Diavolo!* that would have led to mischief; but come, there is no time for talk; you must go up through the window again."

"Madonna!" exclaimed Marcella, "that's impossible—I'm not a cat."

"No," returned Servili; "cats have not such well-shaped legs as you possess; but

come, I have a ladder ready for you to mount, and then tap at the window. I have not been near; I found this ladder in the tool-house.'

So saying, they proceeded cautiously to the mansion, and, listening for a moment and finding all still, they got beneath Camilla's window. There was a light in the room.

"Give this note to your mistress," said the Secretary of the Signor Barracco, "and tell her to fear not, but that it would be worse than useless to resist the Signor Barracco's projects; obey quietly, and depend on assistance."

Marcella mounted the ladder, tapped as she had been desired, and was immediately answered by the amazed Countess, who never dreamed of Marcella's returning that way; indeed, she never expected her back, for she knew she dare not return and knock for admission. Joyfully opening the window, Marcella entered; the ladder was instantly removed, and the shutter closed.

CHAPTER IX.

Percy Devereux, with a feeling of great uneasiness, hastened into the house, and found the Countess Castiglioni still in the sitting-room.

"Well, Percy," she said, looking up into his face, "I am glad you are back. I did not feel very comfortable during your absence. You did not, I suppose, pass through the iron gate?"

"No, indeed, Laura, for I met Camilla's favourite attendant struggling through the shrubbery, coming here with a note from Camilla for you, and one from a person in

the Signor Barracco's establishment, called Servili."

"Ah!" cried the Countess, eagerly, "there is something wrong. I told you I had no faith in that intemperate man's promises. He intends playing us false."

"Here's your note, Laura; I am anxious to read mine," and breaking the seal, he commenced reading.

"Good heaven!" exclaimed the Countess. "The Count is going to carry off Camilla this very night."

Percy strode across the room and pulled the bell, saying to the Countess,

"Dear Laura, order my horse at once to the door—there is not a moment to lose. I must sail this night if I can, or at all events before dawn."

"What does Servili say? Though secretary to Beppo, he loves the ground Camilla treads upon. He dearly reverenced her father, whose secretary he also was, and who left him quite independent, but for some

reason of his own he accepted the post of secretary to Beppo. What does he say?"

"What a fool and dolt I was!" exclaimed Percy, passionately, but the attendant entering the room caused him to pause.

"Annette," said the Countess, "tell Jacomo to order the Signor Devereux's horse to be saddled and brought round quickly to the door."

"It is a fearfully dark night, my lady," and Annette looked into Commander Devereux's face.

"Quite light enough, Annette," said our hero. "Do not lose time, for I must gallop nearly all the way. Luckily I ordered the yacht to be taken out of the Arsenal yesterday; so she is lying ready for sea."

When Annette closed the door, Percy Devereux said,

"The Signor Servili writes that Beppo Barracco sails at daybreak from Voltri, with his niece, in the Polacca brig the 'Bella Donna,' bound for Civita Vecchia. Once in Rome, to

rescue Camilla from the power of the Church, would be impossible ; to attempt to take her from his house would be a terrible risk, and would end, if attempted, in loss of life, as he has ten unscrupulous armed retainers guarding the house."

"But what does Servili advise?" asked the Countess, eagerly and anxiously.

"He says that as time is precious, we have but one course to pursue : for me to put to sea immediately in my yacht, and get within clear view of the vessels lying close in shore opposite the town of Voltri. He minutely describes the Polacca brig that Beppo Barracco has hired to convey him and his niece and attendants to Civita Vecchia, so that that there may be no possibility of mistaking her. The brig he says, is a fast one, and carries a captain, two mates, and eight sailors. I am to keep this vessel in sight till she is clear of the land, then run her aboard and take the Countess and her female attendants into the yacht, make for Malta, and there

marry the Countess, which would at once put an end to Beppo Barracco's schemes."

"That is a hazardous plan," said the Countess, seriously; "still, I see no other course to pursue, as it would be a far greater risk to attack the Count and his retainers on their way to the vessel ; besides, we could not get half a dozen men we could depend upon. Blood would surely be shed, and the law would then claim its victims. Servili is right. If you manage to carry Camilla off without injury to anyone in the brig, no ill consequences may follow, for the Signor Barracco knows he is acting with perfidious deception and also illegally. He will shun publicity."

"There shall be no injury inflicted on anyone," said our hero. "I have fourteen fine young fellows on board the yacht ; the crew of a small trading vessel will offer no resistance, depend on that. Ha! There is my horse. Adieu, dear Laura—a thousand thanks for all your kindness and deep anxiety for Camilla's welfare. I have numerous

friends in Malta. Captain Vansittart's wife and daughters reside there, and under their protection I will place Camilla till we get married. I will write immediately I reach the island."

"God bless you, Percy, and the dear girl also; and may He protect you both through this, to me, apparently dangerous trial."

"Remember me to the dear children; and when you write and tell me this affair bears no injurious consequences, I will return to Genoa."

Devereux mounted his horse, and lighted by a flambeau through the avenue to the lodge gate, gained the road. It was an exceedingly dark night, but after a time the great obscurity passed off, a break occurring in the cloudy sky. Pushing on at a rapid rate, the seven miles between Sester and Genoa were soon passed, and the outer gates of the latter were reached. Shewing his night pass, he was instantly admitted, and in two minutes more, he passed through the Strada

Balbi, and drew bridle in the court yard of the Croce del Malta. The ostlers looked surprised at the foam that covered the sleek sides of the horse, but giving them a dollar, he said "See that he is thoroughly dried before you make him up for the night." He hurried into the hotel and summoned his man Phillips.

Tom soon made his appearance,

"You rode hard, sir. I have just been to the stable, and—"

"Tell me, Tom," interrupted Percy Devereux, showing considerable anxiety; "has the yacht been taken out of the Arsenal ?"

"Yes, sir, Mr. Blowhard warped her out yesterday; she lies just off the Arsenal."

"How fortunate! Now, Tom, be alive; pack up a few things, and get ready for us to go aboard at once. I must clear the harbour before daybreak. Send the landlord to me. I must have some provisions better than the ship's present larder can afford. It's now

eleven o'clock; we must get on board before twelve, or the sea gates will be closed.

Money is a powerful agent for accomplishing one's wishes. It is almost magical. Our hero and his valet and two large hampers of choice provisions were stowed away in the boat of Antonio the Lucky, who was roused from his slumbers to carry them to the yacht.

In a few minutes they were alongside the "Wild Gazelle," just as the great bell of the Annunciata tolled the midnight hour. As Devereux placed a Napoleon in the hands of Antonio, who resisted as long as he could taking any remuneration, our hero said—

"Not two hours ago, I saw, and was speaking to your pretty Marcella; she has done me a great service—very great indeed, and it will not be forgotten, I assure you."

"Our lives are at your service, noble Signor," replied the young waterman, gratefully. "You saved one who is dearer to me than life."

The watch on the deck of the schooner were amazed when their commander appeared amongst them.

"Now, my lads, call all hands up. I will rouse Mr. Blowhard, and let us be ready for sea in as short a time as possible."

Entering the cabin, Tom commenced stowing away the contents of the hampers, whilst Mr. Blowhard dressed himself with all the haste his one arm admitted.

"Bless me, sir!" exclaimed the old salt, as he entered the cabin, "nothing wrong, sir—nothing—"

"Well, nothing, old boy," returned Percy Devereux, "that I can tell you now. I want the schooner to be off Voltri by break of day. There's a breeze from the land now, so go on deck, and see that we are under weigh at once. By the bye, what provisions have you?"

"Well, sir, if it's not a very long cruise, we are pretty well off—quite abundance of everything for the crew, but—"

"Ah!" interrupted our hero, who was quietly divesting himself of his shore-going toggery, as Jack styles it, "if you mean that I require anything better, rest satisfied. I have brought some choice refreshments in the hampers Tom is storing away, for I expect visitors in the female line, with whom our sea stores might not agree. Look sharp, and let us clear the harbour." And putting on his pea jacket, Devereux and old Blowhard ascended on deck.

The schooner's topsails were set, her mainsail up, and the anchor just breaking ground, and in less than ten minutes the "Wild Gazelle" was gliding over the still waters of the port, with a fresh breeze from the north.

The "Gazelle" was soon under all her canvas, and being strong-handed, the deck was quickly in first-rate order, the ropes coiled, boats stowed, &c., &c.

Having cleared the Pharo, and shaped a course for Voltri, but intending to keep some five miles off from the town, our hero gave

the helm to one of the crew, and having told the steward to serve wine and refreshments on the cabin table, he instructed Mr. Blowhard to descend with him and take a glass of grog.

Now the old skipper could take a glass of grog at all hours; it mattered nothing to him whether it was twelve at night, or the same hour in the forenoon. Nevertheless, though liking his allowance, he was always in moderation.

"Now, my friend," said Devereux, when they had filled their glasses, "I will tell you the cause of this hasty cruise of mine. By the way, we have left all our papers ashore, but no matter—but that I may not lead you into a scrimmage blind-folded, I—"

"Well, blow me! Captain Devereux, you need only say do so-and-so, and may I be spliced—which thanks be to old Neptune, I never was, and never will be—if I don't do it, if I were to lose my life."

"I know that, old ship-mate; but you see

we think differently on the subject of matrimony. You never had your precious neck in a noose of that kind. Now, I am going just to try how the yoke will suit me."

The old salt swallowed his smoking-hot grog at a draught, which made his full, round face look like the sun in a fog, for the strength and heat of the punch nearly choked the old tar, he was so amazed.

His commander laughed heartily, and then, in a few words, stated he was running for Voltri, to watch the movements of a Polacca-rigged brig, named the "Bella Donna;" that in this brig there was a young lady of rank, to whom he was betrothed, and her guardian being a rank Jesuit, and very bigoted, was carrying off the lady to make her a nun. Percy Devereux then stated that he intended running alongside the Polacca brig, and carry off the lady and her female attendants, and then steer for Malta.

The old skipper listened with singular attention. That he was astonished, was appar-

ent, but only astonished that his commander, whom he considered one of the finest, bravest, and handsomest men in the navy, should have to take so much trouble to make himself, as he considered, miserable; but he rubbed his hands and said,

"All right, sir; we'll soon overhaul this Polacca brig."

"But mind, my old comrade, when you put the crew up to my intentions, there must be no injury inflicted on the crew of the brig. Merely keep them quiet, though I scarcely think they will offer any resistance; if they do, we must overpower them without bloodshed."

"Aye, aye, sir, we can easily do that. No necessity to use either fire-arms or cutlasses. Boat stretchers will be quite enough. We are a strong crew, and none of these Italian merchant craft have more than eight or ten for a crew, including captain and mate."

"Now you understand me," said our hero, "all will go right. In two hours or less,

you will be close enough, then brace your topsails aback and wait for day light. I will just lie down for a couple of hours on the sofa. Let all but the watch go and take their rest."

Our hero threw himself on a sofa, more to think than seeking rest. He was not without some anxiety, for there was a possibility of failure. The Signor Barracco might change his tactics, and instead of putting to sea, pursue his purpose by land. However the case might be, Percy Devereux continued, instead of sleeping, to torment his mind, and perplex his thoughts, till at last he jumped up, at the expiration of the two hours, and proceeded on deck. His first look was aloft; the sky was overcast. He then walked up to his skipper, who declined going to his cot, and asked him what he thought of the weather.

"Well, sir, there's still a breeze off the land; but it comes in fitful puffs."

"The sky is too overcast for the *tramon-*

tana," observed Captain Devereux, "and there's a considerable ground swell I think, before many hours are over, we shall have a breeze from the south west; the swell sets in from that quarter."

"Aye, aye, sir! sure fore-runner of what the Italians in Genoa call 'Le Bechia,' but I am just thinking, sir, that your best plan will be not to stand too close in for Voltri, for if this Polacca brig is a fast sailer—and you say, sir, that they are carrying away this young lady against her will—there will be a sharp look out kept, and if they sight this craft, hovering about the bay, they will suspect something, as she's not an every day looking craft; but as to the brig out-running us, that's all moonshine. She must be a clipper, built by some one not born, that will beat the 'Wild Gazelle.'"

"I'm not afraid of that, old comrade, but I think you are quite right not to attract observation till the brig gets well clear of the land, so now stretch across the gulf, and then

put about, and keep just at a sufficient distance to be able to make out with our glasses the different crafts anchored before Voltri."

Having reached across the gulf, the schooner was put about, and with her fore sheet to windward was allowed to forge slowly ahead. The commander paced the deck, anxiously regarding the land as the dawn appeared and made objects dimly visible. The roll of the swell came more rapidly in from the south west, whilst puffs of wind from the land were felt at intervals. The weather was sultry, and over the land hung dark clouds, whilst to seaward the dense masses seemed to heave up with a southerly breeze.

As soon as the town of Voltri appeared in sight, some four or five miles to windward, Percy Devereux, who held a very powerful magnifying glass in his hand, fixed his gaze upon the cluster of vessels, anchored off the town. Voltri, a small town situated at the termination of the gulf of the same name, has

no port or shelter from any wind save the *tramontana*, and in southerly gales any vessel caught at anchor before it is almost sure to be driven ashore and wrecked by the tremendous sea that runs into the gulf., Very large vessels are built at Voltri, and a considerable trade carried on with coasting vessels. Already the aspect of the weather, and the ground swell that broke upon the beach, appeared to frighten the captains of, the feluccas, and tartanes, and xebecques, anchored before the town, for they were all busy making sail and heaving up their anchors.

"I have her now," said Devereux, speaking to old Blowhard, "she is the only square rigged craft at anchor, and she is making sail; her topsails are up and sheeted home; she will be under weigh in ten minutes. Let our fore sheet draw, and keep away a little more to the southward."

"Aye, aye, sir! I can make her out; she's filling her topsails, and now, as she turns her

starn to the town, I can see a white form for a figure head."

"Yes," returned our hero. "That's the 'Bella Donna,' and she looks a handsome craft."

CHAPTER X.

At the western extremity of the town or Voltri, was a large, rambling old building, once a place of some pretensions, and which might even once have been styled a Palazzo. It was five hundred yards from any other building, and close to the steep shingly beach which protected the town from the furious sea, that in heavy gales break with the noise of thunder upon this strong rampart of defence.

In the year 1860, this old building was turned into a tolerable hostelry, for it had numerous chambers, and most extensive stables, formerly used by the great body of

muleteers that traversed, with merchandise, the mountain roads and sea shores of the Rivieri de Ponenti. This traffic still exists, but greatly diminished by steam on land and sea.

On the night that the Signor Barracco made up his mind to hire the Polacca brig, the "Bella Donna," this hostelry, called the "Savoy Arms," was crowded with men, all wearing the well known red shirts and slouched beavers of the Garibaldians; but these men were carefully screened from observation, by being confined to chambers in the back of the building. In a front chamber on the ground floor, five individuals were seated, on each side of a large oak table, on which were placed divers flasks of wine, glasses, bowls, pots of tobacco, and a pile of clay pipes. The occupants were drinking, smoking, and talking at intervals. The most conspicuous amongst them was a tall, bony, and very powerful man, about forty years old, a type of a class now nearly

extinct. One hundred years ago, he would have been classed with those pests of Genoa the half assassin, or bravo, and Ligurian gentleman; and in 1860, might be termed a reckless adventurer. He wore the tarnished uniform of some extinct Sardinian regiment, with the addition of the Garibaldi red shirt.

In his broad belt he had stuck a brace of four-barrelled revolvers and a sheathed stiletto; he wore boots to the knees; and lying on the table were a dirty, well-used pair of gauntlet gloves; his features were coarse and repulsive, but his thick, black moustache and whiskers and short beard nearly hid the whole of his face, leaving only a pair of dark, sparkling, restless eyes to be seen; his head was covered by a thick mass of jet black hair, almost lying on his shoulders. He called himself Colonel Carlo Riotti; he sat at the head of the table.

Next him was the skipper of the "Bella Donna," a man of middle height, broad shouldered, and with a round bullet head, massive

features, and a skin the colour of mahogany; there was, however, nothing whatever repulsive in his features. The other three men were mariners—the first and second mates of the Polacca brig and the steward.

Colonel Carlo Riotti had hired the brig after Beppo Barracco had landed, to carry himself and forty-five volunteers to Sicily, to join Garibaldi.

When the Signor Servili, the secretary of the Signor Barracco, had gone to seek the skipper of the "Bella Donna," he had met him at a small cabana or venta, in the town; therefore he made the arrangement without being aware that the pardone had engaged to take on board the brig, Colonel Riotti and his forty-five wild adventurers.

The skipper was a man who would do anything for money; therefore, without any hesitation whatever he let the brig, and the entire use of the cabin to the Signor Barracco, and agreed to land him and his family at Civita Vecchia.

As soon as the Signor Servili left him, he began to think how he should manage with Colonel Riotti. Notwithstanding the warlike and reckless manner and appearance of the redoubtable colonel, the captain of the "Bella Donna" was not at all afraid of him. He was only thinking of how he could manage to carry him and his attendants and the Signor Beppo and his niece and female attendants.

Meeting his two mates and his steward, he took them with him to the Savoy Arms, and they and Colonel Carlo Riotti sat down for a drinking bout.

Such was the party we beg to introduce our readers to.

The skipper knocking the ashes out of his pipe, and commencing to fill it again, said, looking up into the Colonel's face—

"I think, Colonel Riotti, I can make a good bit of this voyage."

"*Cente diavolos*," exclaimed the Colonel, "I think you have. Haven't I agreed to pay you a thousand piastres for landing me and

my battalion on the west coast of Sicily? Haven't I paid you five hundred in advance?"

"All right, *amico*," said the skipper, filling his glass; "all fair and above board; but look at the risk I run. If I am caught by a Neapolitan cruiser, it's all up with the 'Bella Donna.'"

"*Corpo de diavolo!*" fiercely exclaimed the Colonel, his eyes flashing as he looked at the skipper, "what are you driving at?"

"I'll tell you, Colonel, but don't get into a passion, for I think you yourself will feel pleased at what I have done."

"Say what you have done!" roared the Colonel, exasperated at the coolness of the skipper.

"Why, you see, I was obliged to let the cabin in my ship to the Signor Barracco."

Colonel Riotti knocked over his glass of liquor, dropped his pipe, and sank back in his chair, glancing at the skipper as he said,

"What, rascal! Let the cabin to who,

after my bargain for it, and paying my five hundred piastres down?"

He laid his hand on one of his pistols, and was pulling it out, when he saw the captain's two mates—strong, able men—instantly unsheath their long-bladed, formidable knives.

"Be easy, Colonel; one would think I was going to cheat you, and sail without you, instead of which I am doing you a service. Do you know, without the Signor Barracco's influence with the customs, I could not sail at daybreak, and if it was known I was going to embark your followers, there would be a stopper put upon my sailing altogether. Didn't I tell you it was rumoured that an order was issued by the authorities in Genoa to stop all vessels sailing with recruits for Garibaldi. I have just heard that it is a fact. Now, by my taking the Signor Barracco and his beautiful niece, who is a countess in her own right, and a wealthy heiress—"

"Eh!" interrupted the colonel, thrusting his fingers through his beard and whiskers,

and looking vivacious, "how old is this countess? You say she is handsome, and an heiress; tell me all about her."

The skipper laughed, rubbed his strong, horny hands, and said—

"I thought I would let you in for a good thing. A fine, personal man like yourself, scarcely fifty—"

"*Cente diavolos!* say forty, *amico.*"

"Well, forty, I meant. You see, Colonel, the Signor Barracco is afraid his niece will run away with a heretic Englishman, and as the Signor is a true son of Mother Church, he is taking her at once out of the way; he will take her to Rome, and put her in a convent."

"*Sacristi!* that must not be," muttered Riotti; "better take me for a husband than become a nun. I would show her the world, and she need not be ashamed of me—a full colonel, and of a noble family."

He had never heard of his father, but his mother had been a somewhat notorious character in Milan.

"Well, that's your business, not mine," said the skipper. "Are you satisfied to let the ladies have the cabin? Your men, you know, have the hold fitted up for them, and you can have my small cabin to yourself, or shall I go back from my bargain with the Signor Barracco and wait till the customs are open?"

"*Diavolo!* No. Are you mad? No; certainly let the Signor and the lady have the entire cabin to themselves."

"Well, then, the best thing we can do," observed the skipper, inwardly congratulating himself on the success of his plans, and the goodly sum he would receive for the voyage of the "Bella Donna," and troubling himself very little about the absurd projects of the Garibaldian adventurer. "The best thing you can do is to immediately embark your men before they get too drunk to manage them quietly. Besides, the Signor Barcacco must have no suspicion that the "Bella Donna" has so redoubtable a personage aboard as the valiant Colonel Carlo Riotti."

"Are the two large boats ashore, mates?" asked the skipper, turning to his mates, who were quietly smoking, and imbibing enough wine to swamp any ordinary head.

"Yes, under the shelter of the three rocks that break the surf now running in," replied one of the men. "I think when this land wind dies out, we shall have a rough gale from seaward."

"Well, then, colonel, get your men quietly to the beach; it's dark as pitch," said the skipper, "and we shall have just time to get you all aboard before the Signor Barracco comes to embark."

"Well, I think it would be a good move. Some of my men are raw recruits, and some of them not very easily managed; but I'll manage them."

Ascending to the upper chambers, in which were assembled a motly group of penniless adventurers, all eager to embark and conquer a kingdom, and each individually thinking himself a hero. Yet more than the half of

them were the very scum of Turin, Milan, and Genoa—shoeless, penniless vagabonds, picked up by a greater vagabond than themselves. The Colonel, as he styled himself, was a discharged sergeant, having abundance of impudence, and sticking at nothing in the way of falsehood. He had passed himself off as a colonel upon one of the Garibaldian agents, as an enthusiast in the cause of his country's freedom. He was supplied with funds, and employed to collect recruits to join Garibaldi in Sicily. Recruits he found, by holding out golden prospects, plunder, and as little fighting as possible.

On entering the chambers where the men were stowed away, he found them seated in various attitudes, and on every available article of furniture the house afforded. On the tables were various kinds of eatables—bread, jars of wine, and a variety of drinking utensils.

About a dozen of these men were deserters from the regular army, and were considered

of value, as they could drill the others, and, besides, they could fight as well as plunder. On these Colonel Riotti depended a great deal in keeping his unruly recruits in order; and as they were well-armed and the others but indifferently so, they succeeded in keeping a kind of obedience to orders. They were all now mustered, and after sundry oaths and invectives against the officers for disturbing them, they were got quietly out of the house, marched to the beach, embarked, and safely stowed away in the hold of the "Bella Donna," which had been roughly prepared for their reception. The boats were then pulled back to the beach to wait for the presence of the Signor Barracco and his family.

We now return to the mansion of the Signor Barraco. The Jesuit was busily employed preparing for embarkation, perfectly satisfied that not a soul had left the house or entered it, since giving orders to that effect, save the Signor Servili, in whom he placed

the most unbounded confidence. He congratulated himself on the success of his project for defeating the plans of the heretic Englishman and his degenerate niece, who dared to fly from the holy asylum he had prepared for her reception, and where her days would be passed in penitence and prayer, and herself prepared for a blessed hereafter; instead of which he shuddered with horror at the thought that she preferred destroying her mother's soul and her own, by flinging herself into the arms of an accursed foreigner and heretic.

We must confess that the Signor Barracco had no worldly motives in thus acting. He coveted none of his niece's fortune—the church should have it all; he was a man body and soul devoted to the Romish Church. A perfect Jesuit, he considered all means fair and approved of by the Deity, so that the end prospered. He never bestowed a thought upon the sufferings he was so anxious to inflict on his niece, and his passionate nature,

inflamed by the meeting with the Englishman, who had dared to seduce his niece from her religion and duty, drove him to adopt measures harsh, cruel, and oppressive.

Camilla, in the meantime, having helped Marcella in through the window, closed it, her heart beating almost audibly with anxiety and fear of being discovered; and then, sinking into a chair, said, in an agitated voice,

"How quickly you are back, Marcella; I never expected that you would be able to get here."

"Ah! Madonna!" returned the girl, "do you think, my lady, I would let you be carried off, and I not accompany you?"

"But who could dream of your getting back? I knew the man who helped you to mount to the window was my dear lamented father's secretary, the Signor Servili. What brought him out to meet you? was he the man that caught you getting out of the window?"

"Yes, my lady, the same. Ah! how startled I was when I felt my legs grasped by a man's hand, Madonna! I thought I should faint. Suppose it had been the Signor Barracco!"

"Then," anxiously interrupted the young Countess, "then you got safe to the Countess'?"

"Oh! yes, Signora; but I again fell into a man's arms, pushing through the shrubbery —I thought it was all over with me then."

"A man out at that time of the night in the Countess' garden!" said Camilla. "Who was he?"

"Madonna! the very person I wanted to see. I was caught up by the Signor Devereux so tenderly; he was coming to have a look at the house."

"Oh!" exclaimed Camilla, turning pale. "Why run such a risk?—if discovered, those retainers of my uncle would surely have fired at him."

"So I told him, my lady, and then he re-

flected, and took the notes, and told me to go back and rejoin the Signor Servili, and be sure to get back to you and tell you to have no fear, that he would watch over and protect you. I therefore rejoined the Signor, and he got a ladder, and thus I got luckily back ; and here is a note the Signor Servili gave me for you. Ah! he is a good man, is the Signor."

"God bless him! He was my lamented father's fast friend, as well as secretary, and he has often told me in secret that he became my uncle's secretary solely to watch over my interests. Now let me see what he says."

The Countess read the note over twice, and then, holding it to the lamp, let it consume into ashes.

Camilla remained silent and thoughtful, and Marcella, gazing into her features, said,

"Pardon me, my lady, but what does the Signor say?"

Camilla aroused herself, replying,

"I was thinking, Marcella; but I will tell you what the Signor says. He has instructed Commander Devereux how to proceed in rescuing me. He is to follow the brig and run along side and take us out, and then carry us to Malta, and—"

Camilla hesitated, and the colour came to her cheek and temple.

"And then, my lady?" put in Marcella, her pretty features betraying considerable curiosity.

"Why," returned the Countess, "the Signor Servili says the best thing Captain Devereux can do will be to marry me."

"The saints be praised, my lady!" exclaimed the young girl, clapping her hands, and her eyes sparkling; "he's quite right—once married, my lady, it is all up with your being made a nun. Oh! how delightful; I wish Antonio was to be of the party."

Camilla could not repress a smile.

"Well, the only thing I dread, Marcella, is

that my uncle, being a man of furious temper, may, as he always goes armed, in his fury do some mischief."

"Oh! I have no fear of that, my lady; the merchant vessel will only have a few men, and the captain's beautiful yacht has fourteen or fifteen fine young men as crew."

A knock at the outward door made mistress and maid start.

"Go and see, Marcella, who is there, for the door I locked and bolted."

Marcella ran to the door.

"Who's there?" cried the girl.

"Humph!" muttered the voice of the Signor Barracco; "you are up still; open the door and let me see what packages you have got ready to send on board."

"I can't do any such thing," said Marcella, promptly. "I'm undressed and my mistress is in bed. We have only two boxes—that's not too much."

"You are a saucy minx," retorted the Signor; "tell your mistress she must be

ready in two hours, and that I will take the two boxes, though I do not see what she wants with more than one."

"Ah! Madonna, I want one myself," said Marcella, sharply.

"*Corpo di Bacco!*" exclaimed the Signor, angrily; "I'm not going to take you—your tongue is too long and too sharp."

"Ha!" said Marcella, a little startled, "then my mistress will not go at all."

"We shall see," said the signor, in a sneering tone.

Camilla approached the door.

"Indeed, uncle," she said mildly, "you are very harsh; but I positively will not stir from this house without Marcella. I do not understand why I should be so treated."

"Well, well, do not be angry, Camilla," replied her uncle, "I only wanted to frighten the girl. She has a sharp tongue. You had better take a couple of hours' sleep. I will rouse you in time." So saying, he retired.

"There's a spiteful old hum—" Marcella

checked herself, saying, "is he not very heartless, wanting to separate me from you?"

"He is, in truth, worse than heartless; he is cruel, and I cannot be blamed by the world, when the treatment I have received is known, that I seek to escape such persecution as my dear, dear father never intended I should undergo; but now that we have packed our things, let us lie down. It will rest us a little, though we may not sleep."

Nevertheless mistress and maid did fall asleep, and slept till they were roused by a loud knocking at the outer door.

CHAPTER XI.

As neither mistress nor maid had undressed, they were soon ready to open the door.

"Why, niece," said the Signor Barracco, "you and Marcella slept like the Seven Sleepers; it is near day-break, and we must hasten on board before the land wind fails."

"We are quite ready, at all events," returned Camilla, "and there are the two trunks."

Two men entered, and carried away the trunks. Several of the old servants of the household were ranged along the corridor to bid their young mistress farewell, and there were tears in their eyes, and in those of the

young Countess, as they did so, for she was much loved, and many a heartfelt prayer was breathed for her safety and happiness.

The Signor Servili was standing in the hall, and the Signor Barracco said,

"I am leaving Servili behind, niece, to manage my correspondence till we return. I first thought of taking him with us."

The Signor bowed, and, approaching the Countess, took the hand held out to him, which respectfully kissing, he said,

"I trust, Countess, we shall soon have the pleasure of seeing you amongst us again," and bowing, he stepped back.

The eyes of Camilla rested upon his with a look of gratitude, as she said, her voice tremulous with emotion,

"It is with extreme regret, Signor Servili, I quit the home of my lamented parents. Did I think I should not return, nothing but force should take me from beneath the roof of my ancestors, and from those faithful friends and retainers I love and esteem."

The Signor Barracco's brows met in a dark frown. He muttered something not exactly audible, but, taking his niece by the hand, led her to the carriage that stood waiting at the door. Then it was that she perceived, standing at a little distance, some ten or a dozen men; and, as the torch-light flashed for a moment upon them, its light betrayed that they were well armed. With a heavy sigh she leaned back against the cushions, and, despite her resolution, burst into a flood of tears.

The Signor Barracco did not enter the carriage—he rode on the box. It was scarcely a mile and a half to the town of Voltri, and in twenty minutes the carriage drove through the long, silent street leading to the place of embarcation.

A faint light was breaking through a murky, lowering sky. The air was close and very sultry, and the ground swell from seaward broke with a portentous sound upon the shingly beach as the Countess and Mar-

cella left the carriage. They could just see the long boat in which they were to embark, held on by four men, to keep it from striking with the roll back of the swell against the range of rock that partly sheltered it from the ground sea.

After some little delay and difficulty, the whole party embarked. Enveloped in her mantle, Camilla Barracco sat in the stern sheets, absorbed in a train of melancholy thoughts. Her whole future depended upon her lover. She never doubted him, but she dreaded some untoward circumstance might occur. There was one thing that rejoiced her—the armed men she had seen when she entered the carriage were left behind. The first mate had charge of the boat. The captain, he stated to the Signor Barracco, had gone on board to have the brig under weigh as quick as possible, for the weather looked threatening, and a sea gale might be expected.

"Ah!" said the Signor Barracco, "I see all the small craft are getting under weigh."

"Eh! *per Bacco!* Signor, if caught in this anchorage by a sou-wester these feluccas and Tartanas would not clear the land on either tack."

As they reached the side of the "Bella Donna," they perceived that her topsails and jib were hoisted, and also mainsail. The land wind came in fitful puffs, and the aspect of the sky over the land looked ominous. The "Bella Donna" was a remarkably handsome Polacca-rigged brig —long, low, and taut rigged. She had formerly belonged to the Neapolitan service, and was then brig rigged; but having been purchased into the merchant service, the few hands employed in trade were not sufficient to work her heavy square yards and lofty spars. She was, therefore, made into a Polacca-rigged craft, one easily and safely handled in the fierce and sudden squalls the Mediterranean Sea is subject to.

On ascending to the deck, the Countess was received by the skipper, and without noticing anybody or anything, she and her maid de-

scended into the cabin, a very roomy and commodious one, recently painted and fitted up. The Signor Barracco followed his men on deck, but did not descend to the cabin. The anchor broke ground, the yards were braced round, the sails filled, and the "Bella Donna" was under weigh.

During the period of getting under weigh, Colonel Riotti and his Garibaldian Volunteers remained stowed away in the hold; but the Colonel could not brook this indignity, so, the moment the sails filled and the brig gathered way, to the amazement of the Signor Barracco, the tall, burly form of the worthy colonel appeared on deck, and walking deliberately up to the Signor Barracco, politely saluted him.

The Signor Barracco—it was broad daylight—stared at him, but instead of saluting him in return, said, abruptly,

"Pray, sir, who are you?"

"Sir," said the Colonel, stiffly, "you are not over polite. I am, sir, Colonel Riotti,

commanding a body of gallant volunteers intended to aid the glorious projects of General Garibaldi, who intends to free our magnificent country from the yoke of tyrants and Jesuitical priests."

The Signor Barracco's face became crimson; he detested the name of Garibaldi, whom he considered an unprincipled adventurer.

"Sir," said he, in return, "you may be whom you please, but you have no business here. You must return on shore. I hired this vessel for my sole use."

"Excuse me, sir," returned the Colonel, drawing out his whiskers, and pulling his moustache, "I hired this vessel before you did, and I have forty-five volunteers stowed away in the hold."

"By ——!" exclaimed the Signor, in his towering rage making a slight mistake in his speech, "our skipper is a rascal, a cheat; I'll—"

"Pardon me, Signor Barracco," interrupted the skipper, blandly, just coming up the com-

panion stairs, "you insult me as well as this worthy gentleman."

"Rascal! did I not pay you for the entire use of this vessel?" roared the Signor Barracco.

"*Bizbanti!*" roared the Colonel, inclined to choke from rage, "didn't I hire this vessel for myself and my volunteers—speak."

"Valiant Colonel and worthy Signor," said the *padrone*, not at all abashed by the vehemence of his two guests, "you are both right; allow me to explain."

As he spoke, half a dozen of the volunteers, who had never been to sea, came up on deck, looking very pale, and evidently inclined to pay the usual tribute to the heaving sea.

The Signor Barracco glared fiercely from one to the other, but he plainly saw that he was sold, and, probably, at the mercy of the Colonel, who had forty-five men at his beck.

"Signor Barracco," said the Colonel, blandly, "permit me to explain, and you will

be quite satisfied, both with my conduct, and also with that of the skipper."

"Necessity has no law," said Barracco, less excitedly.

"You see, sir," continued the Colonel, "I actually hired this vessel first, to land me and my men on the coast of Sicily. Our *padrone* was then solicited to hire his vessel to you. Had he refused, you might possibly have induced the custom-house officers to prevent the vessel sailing with volunteers for Garibaldi. He consulted me, and I immediately said, 'Do not, on any account, disappoint such a noble Signor as the Signor Barracco. It makes no difference to me; I will keep my volunteers quiet, and I am quite willing to give up the entire cabin to the ladies of the Signor's family, and I now repeat,' and the Colonel took off his hat and bowed profoundly, "you are perfectly welcome to all the accommodation this vessel can afford."

Policy and necessity taught the Signor

Barracco politeness ; he bowed in return, and holding out his hand, said—

"You have acted like a gentleman, Colonel. I am quite satisfied, and I hope at meal times you will favour us with your company."

The worthy Colonel congratulated himself on his astuteness, winked at the skipper, and bowed, and shook the Signor's hand most condescendingly. During this time the "Bella Donna" was crowding sail to gain a good offing before the sea breeze set in.

At about five miles distance, the "Wild Gazelle," under easy sail, was heading towards the "Bella Donna." With their glasses, Percy Devereux and old Blowhard were watching her movements: they let her run some two leagues off the land, and then additional sail was set, and the chase begun, the said chase being destined to be a long one.

At times the "Gazelle" tore through the water, her immense sails distended with the

puffs from the land; again she barely held way, the wind dying away into cats' paws. Nevertheless she gained so rapidly on the Polacca brig, that she got within two miles of her, when it suddenly fell stark calm, the swell from the south-west rapidly increasing.

"By Jove! Blowhard," exclaimed our hero; "the wind is done. I have a mind to out boats and board her."

"Won't do, sir," said Blowhard. "Look ashore, sir; there's a heavy thunder storm over Voltri. Moving rapidly out from the land, and away to the south-west, those heavy banks of cloud are upheaved by a powerful south-wester; we are caught between two storms."

Percy Devereux did look around him, and saw a huge, dense-like cloud driving out towards them. Though not a breath of wind played upon the heaving sea, these clouds came rapidly up from seaward; the different currents of air met, the masses settled into a vast, pall-like mass, the clouds pressing one on the

other, some driven by the storm aloft into fragments, twirling and twisting themselves into strange shapes, and then was heard the roar of winds aloft, as if contending for victory.

"Lower away, handsomely, my lads," cried Captain Devereux to his silent crew, who were all on deck watching the contest of the elements aloft, "the storm will be upon us in less than five minutes."

Then came a vivid, dazzling flash of lightning, like a sheet of flame, half blinding all with its intense vividness, and the crash of heaven's artillery that followed seemed to proclaim the annihilation of the globe. The schooner trembled as if struck, and the next instant, the storm from out the gulf agitated the waters a quarter of a mile astern of them. One glance our hero obtained of the "Bella Donna," and it eased his mind. She looked as if under bare poles, for all her yards were lowered upon deck and her sails furled.

The next moment the demon of the storm was upon them. On he came with a roar of triumph, proud of his might, and on the frail-looking craft he rushed, with a shriek of delight. With him he carried a sheet of spray, torn from the surface of the waters, and looking like a snow-drift ; but every sail was furled except the storm staysail, hastily hoisted to bring the schooner's stern to the tempest. With a yell the staysail was torn from its fastening and scattered like ribbons in the air. The "Gazelle" bent under its violence and fury, till her topsail yard buried itself in the now foaming deep.

"Jam the wheel down," shouted Devereux, grasping the weather rigging ; "hoist the storm jib ; it will bring her round before the wind."

The jib did its duty, though it also followed the fate of the staysail, and the schooner righting and bringing her stern to the gale, flew before the tempest like an affrighted sea bird on the wing.

Old Blowhard and one of the crew was at the wheel. Devereux, half drowned by the continual sheets of spray that flew over the low decks of the schooner, now that the craft was flying before the gale, the sea rapidly rising, left his place and gained the side of old Blowhard.

"By Jove! old boy, we had a sharp half-hour of it; except in the Black Sea, I never felt a heavier squall. We shall not be able, till the spray ceases, to sight the brig. We do not require sail. I fear we shall over-run the 'Bella Donna' as it is."

"Blow me! it was a sneezer," said the old tar, as he shook himself and left the wheel to the able seaman beside him; for now, going before the gale, a child might almost have guided the vessel. For two hours the tempest raged in fitful squalls, shifting with each squall several points. After this, the sky cleared over the land, and then the tempest settled into a remarkably heavy gale from the north. The sea had now got up into

regular white-topped waves, breaking dangerously at times; but the spray was clearing away, and all were looking out anxiously to sight the "Bella Donna," for both vessels were forced, from the violent fury of the gale, to run dead before the tempest.

"The 'Bella Donna!'" said our hero, first catching sight of her, looming indistinctly through the spray blown from the foaming seas. All looked in the direction pointed out, and there she was, about a mile distant, going steadily before it, under a storm stay-sail alone—her yards all down.

"Ah!" said the old master, to his commander, "those Polacca-rigged craft are handy chaps in squalls. He looks all right; hasn't lost a rag, I'll warrant."

"Yes," returned Percy Devereux, "he looks all right; but I fear it is almost impossible to run alongside him in this troubled sea."

"Just so, sir," answered old Blowhard, "he's a much larger and stronger-built craft; he

would grind us to splinters. Blow me! she goes a-head well. She's fast."

"Run up a piece of our foresail," said our hero, "I will get as close as I can. By Jove! they suspect us. They are hoisting their fore yard, with the sail furled."

"There appears a number of men upon deck, sir," said Blowhard, eyeing the brig through the glass, "and they all seem dressed in red shirts."

"Red shirts!" echoed Percy Devereux, with a start, taking the glass, and letting it rest upon the deck of the Polacca.

After a careful survey, he said, turning to his skipper, and looking serious,

"The men in the red shirts are armed; they are Garibaldians, but they are evidently not accustomed to the sea, for half of them are sick, and all holding on by the rigging and ropes as for life. What on earth could cause the Signor Barracco to put his niece on board a vessel full of reckless adventurers?"

"We'd tumble those red gentry over like

nine-pins, sir," said Tom Phillips, who was standing by, "if we could only get alongside; they have not a leg to stand on."

"Very true," observed our hero, thoughtfully; "to get alongside is the difficulty."

By this time the fore-yard was in its place. The sail, treble reefed, was suddenly dropped, and instantly, strong handled, its sheets were made fast. The sail, distended to bursting, tore the brig through the sea, and buried her bows till the foaming crests poured over the figure-head into the fore part of the brig. She was leaving the "Gazelle," when Percy Devereux ordered sail to be carefully made upon the yacht.

In a few moments a double-reefed topsail was set and sheeted home, and then the foresail was close reefed. The "Gazelle" seemed scarcely to touch the water. She skimmed the lofty seas, like a sea-bird, and in half an hour was within hail of the Polacca brig, and not fifty yards from her to windward.

Devereux was quite right. The Signor

Barracco recognized the "Gazelle" the moment he beheld her, before the storm broke upon them. After getting a couple of leagues from the land, the "Bella Donna," like the "Gazelle," became becalmed. The skipper beheld the storm brewing over the high mountains that back the town of Voltri. In sweeping the horizon with his glass, his attention was caught by the schooner yacht. He thought her a vessel of war.

"What vessel are you looking at, Captain?" asked Colonel Riotti, who was standing near, conversing with the Signor Barracco. As it was extremely sultry, the Countess Camilla had ascended the cabin stairs and stood on the last step, leaning on the slide of the companion, gazing eagerly around on the heavy but calm sea. The maiden's thoughts were centred upon her lover, and her eyes anxiously sought to catch a glimpse of the schooner yacht.

She was near enough to hear Colonel Riotti's question "What vessel is that?" The redoubtable Colonel had an idea that Neapo-

litan cruisers might be roaming in Genoese waters.

"It is a rather remarkable looking schooner," answered the skipper ; "very long and taunt, raking masts, with a figure-head like a deer."

Signor Barracco changed colour, and abruptly took the glass from the skipper, and fixed it on the schooner. He knew that Commander Devereux had a beautiful schooner yacht, called the "Wild Gazelle," in Genoa. As his gaze rested on the graceful yacht, quite visible, even to the figure-head of the "Gazelle," he stamped upon the deck with passion, and said aloud,

"I am betrayed! That is the yacht of the heretical Englishman Devereux !"

Camilla heard the words; her heart, beat and the colour came to cheek and temples, but she instantly hurried below.

Colonel Riotti looked at the Signor Barracco, surprised at his words and his evident passion. The skipper's attention was called

to the care of his craft, for he perceived that the gathering storm was about to break ; he ran forward, called all his crew on deck, and ordered the sails to be furled and the yards lowered.

"What vessel is it, Signor Barracco ?" enquired the Colonel.

Camilla's uncle hesitated a moment, and then said,

"Colonel, you can do me a service."

The Colonel bowed.

The Signor Barracco then said,

"The vessel you see yonder belongs to one who had the audacity and wickedness during my absence to trifle with my niece's affections. She has been devoted from her birth —in accordance with the vow of her mother, who died in giving her birth—to the service of the church—in fact, to take the veil. That accursed English heretic has seduced her from her duty, and she intended to elope with him. To prevent this, I hired this vessel to

take us on our way to Rome, by landing us at Civita Vecchia. Once in Rome, there will be no difficulty in forcing her into a convent, and thus her mother's vow, registered in Heaven, will be fulfilled."

"And that vessel yonder?" asked the Colonel, who had listened very seriously.

"That vessel," interrupted the Signor, "is watching us, and will run us aboard and carry off my niece."

"What! *Corpo di demonios!*" exclaimed the Colonel, laying his hand on the hilt of his sword, "with Colonel Riotti and forty-five followers aboard—hem! There's my hand, Signor Barracco. If he attempts any such mad exploit, I will have my comrades armed on deck, and annihilate that piratical *Inglesi*—yes, *Corpo di Bacco!* and sink his ship."

"Signors, Signors!" roared the skipper, "the tempest is upon us—get into the cabin, or make fast to a rope."

Both the Signor and the Colonel started,

and made a rush for the cabin, as the loud roar of the hurricane was heard, and the flash of lighting almost blinded them.

"May the thunder of heaven crush that vile heretic's ship!" said the Signor Barracco, as he and the Colonel were thrown down the cabin stairs by the sudden heel over of the brig, and both rolled into the cabin, to the amazement of the Countess and Marcella. Thinking the vessel was on her beam ends, the two gentlemen quickly regained their legs, and, hurrying up the stairs, were met by a blinding sheet of water cast over the brig by the fury of the squall.

"Oh! blessed saints! she will founder; we are lost," tremblingly exclaimed the valiant Colonel.

"No," said the Signor Barracco, after a glance; "she has righted, and is going before the gale. Heaven has worked a miracle. The storm, if it does not sink the yacht, will save us from being pursued. They cannot see us; I'll make the skipper change his course."

As soon as he could get near the captain, he whispered in his ear,

"Change your course!"

"Eh! *sacriste*!" shouted the skipper. "Change our course? *Diantre*! we can only run before the wind under bare poles; we can't shew a rag. The yacht has probably foundered. I never before encountered so tremendous a gale at this time of year."

"God grant that she has gone down!" muttered the Signor. "They are lost souls, as it is."

During the fiercest part of the gale, Camilla retired to her own cabin, and she and the terrified Marcella lay down in their berths. The latter, entirely unaccustomed to the sea, suffered not only from fright, but the penalty almost all pay that tempt the perils of the mighty leveller of all ranks in life.

As the hurricane settled into a steady gale, the Signor Barracco and the redoubtable Colonel Riotti held an earnest conversation concerning the yacht, the latter swearing he

would annihilate every man who should dare to set foot on the deck of the "Bella Donna." They ascended to the deck, in order to see how affairs were, and whether there was any sign of the yacht, supposing she had survived the first burst of the tempest. Most of the unhappy volunteers were on deck, and deadly sick; they could not stand the heat and the rolling below.

As the surface of storm-tossed sea became cleared, in a measure, of the flying foam, Signor Barracco and the Colonel looked eagerly over the stern; the "Bella Donna" was then carrying a storm stay-sail.

Suddenly Colonel Riotti called out,

"*Maladetta*! the schooner!"

All eyes were turned in the direction the Colonel pointed, and there, through the misty spray, the lofty, tapering spars of the "Wild Gazelle" were visible, and in another moment the long low graceful hull was seen skimming the tops of the seas, without a stitch of

canvas; she appeared to fly over the space of foamy water between them.

The Signor Barracco shook his clenched hands at the yacht, and a terrible oath passed his lips; as, hurrying to the astonished skipper, he said,

"She will run us aboard!"

"No, no, signor," replied the *Padrone*; "no fear of that in this heavy sea; she would be knocked into splinters."

"Now, then, Colonel," said Barracco, eagerly, "let your men hand up arms; let us shew this heretic Englishman what he has to expect, should he attempt the capture of my niece."

"Let him come within shot," said the Colonel, twisting his moustache. "*Per Bacco*! he'll never try the experiment a second time."

Turning to a sergeant of the Garibaldians, less sick than the rest, he ordered him to arm the best of the volunteers, and those who

could stand to range themselves along the deck.

"*Cospetto*!" muttered the sergeant to himself. "It's easy to say range them along the deck, when they can't even stand in this *maladetto* bark."

CHAPTER XII.

THE Countess Barracco, who suffered nothing from the violent motion of the brig, except the difficulty of keeping an erect position—as soon as she felt that the brig, going dead before the gale, had acquired a steadier motion, got up, and throwing a large mantle over her shoulders, entered the principal cabin, which no person occupied. The tramp of many feet on deck, and then the voices of men shouting, showing that the "Gazelle" would assuredly follow them, she ascended the cabin stairs, and gently pushing back the slide, gazed out first on the deck, then over the tumultuous and heaving waters.

With an exclamation of delight, her gaze

rested upon the graceful and rapidly advancing yacht, looking like a toy upon the boisterous billows, so symmetrical was her build, so beautifully proportioned her spars, and so thread-like her rigging. From the rapidly advancing yacht, she turned her attention to the deck of the "Bella Donna." Standing near the mainmast, she beheld her uncle, talking vehemently and passionately to the grim looking Colonel Riotti and the skipper of the "Bella Donna," whilst some fifteen or twenty of the Garibaldian volunteers, grasping a musket in one hand were clinging spasmodically to every available object to steady themselves, and looking as pale and miserable as it was possible for men to look. As she gazed, the schooner came almost within hail. Colonel Riotti started forward, calling to his men to stand at ease; in doing so, several fell prostrate on the deck, and that position suiting them, there they remained, whilst the exasperated officer, after bestowing sundry kicks to relieve their

imfirmities, snatched a musket from a prostrated hero, and rejoined the Signor Barracco and the skipper, swearing he would shoot the first man that he could take aim at on the deck of the piratical schooner, as he called the "Gazelle."

Eagerly watching the "Wild Gazelle's" every movement she beheld her shoot up in a parallel line with the "Bella Donna" and not more than fifty yards off, when a young man suddenly sprung upon the bulwarks, and with one hand holding on by the after backstay, raised his hat from his head, and waved it several times towards Camilla, who involuntarily had sprung up the last step, and stood upon the deck, grasping the companion slide.

"Curse the heretic!" shouted the enraged Signor Barracco, stamping on the deck, "give me the musket!"

"Is that your man?" coolly observed Colonel Riotti, cocking his musket. "Let him digest that," and he levelled and fired.

It was by no means a bad shot, for the ball knocked Devereux's hat off, he having just replaced it on his head. Camilla uttered a faint cry, but blushing, as all eyes turned upon her, she tore off her scarf, and waving it to her delighted lover, who quite unmoved retained his position, she hurried below.

"Oh! my lady, what was the firing for?" cried Marcella. "I just got a glimpse of the schooner, as you ventured on deck, but the sight of the frightful sea terrified me."

"It is a stormy sea," said Camilla, "but it is not new to me. I have seen it worse. That horrid adventurer my uncle calls Colonel Riotti, fired a musket at Captain Devereux as he stood exposed upon the bulwarks of his yacht, and it went so near as to knock his hat off!"

"The cowardly wretch!" ejaculated Marcella. "Ah! Madonna! if the Signor Devereux was near him he would pitch him overboard!"

In the meantime, the two vessels continued

to run parallel to each other, the sea far too heavy to attempt to run along-side. The crew of the "Bella Donna" were busy hoisting their fore-sail close reefed, which, when set, enabled her to forge ahead of the "Gazelle." But a stay sail being hoisted aboard the schooner, she easily maintained her position.

Commander Devereux was nevertheless extremely uneasy.

"I am puzzled how to act," he said to old Blowhard. It was near sunset, the gale was shewing signs of abating, and the sky again getting overcast and threatening. "You see," he continued, "we are evidently in for a dark night, the coast of Corsica right before us. We cannot weather the Cape even, if we much longer keep on this course. Still we must stick close to this Polacca, which, by the way, sails remarkably fast."

"Yes, sir," answered the old sailor, "it's quite impossible to run aboard her without destroying the schooner, for that brigantine

is a strong built craft. But this gale will go down with the sun, and we shall have a thunder storm, for even now there's a dense black sky rising to leeward, and no doubt we shall have the south west gale after this ceases."

"Well, whatever happens," said Devereux, thoughtfully, "we must not let the brigantine escape us."

The sun set, and the high hills of Cape Corso rose distinctly into sight; the short twilight of the south faded away; and the northerly gale, after some fitful squalls, blew itself out. Immediately a light south west wind sprang up; this after a puff or two expired, and the "Gazelle" and the "Bella Donna," not more than a mile asunder, lay rolling heavily in the agitated waters.

With the night, came the storm clouds from the south west, accompanied by squalls and heavy thunder and lightning, and the gale increased so violently that the "Bella Donna" ran before it, the "Gazelle" fol-

lowing, though our hero feared they would get embayed, for though the night was dark, the land was clearly seen in the vivid flashes of lightning that illuminated the dreary scene of tumultuous heaving waters.

Presently those on the deck of the "Gazelle" could perceive that the brigantine was hove up in the wind, and that she lay to, under close reefed canvas.

The "Gazelle" was instantly put in the same position, and lay to like a sea bird at rest. About midnight a thick drizzling rain fell, shutting out all objects, save the masts of the schooner herself.

Intensely anxious, our hero continued pacing the deck all night, and praying for the dawn to make. There was still a heavy cross sea, and he feared, in the dense fog spread around, the "Bella Donna" might weather the headland and rounding Cape Corso, gain the open sea, and make for the coast of Italy.

CHAPTER XIII.

"After all," said Devereux to Mr. Blowhard, as he paced the deck, "this gale will be of short duration, but I regret to see this thickening up of the weather, and this drizzling rain. I have lost sight of the brig this last half hour."

"She is about a mile to leeward of us," replied the old skipper. "I saw her just before you came upon deck, sir. The gale is going down rapidly, and the mist is increasing."

"In three hours it will be daylight, at all events," said our hero. "We must make short tacks of it, for as the wind now stands

we cannot weather the land to the south. We are in a very deep bay."

As the night wore away, a strict look out was maintained. Devereux became extremely anxious. It was quite possible that the brig might baffle him: she might tack and bear away, and weather Cape Corso, whilst he might imagine she had weathered the south headland, and then make for the coast of Italy, running through the Straits of Bonafaccio, the channel between Corsica and Sardinia. The whole of the night was passed by Percy pacing the deck; the gale had gone down to a double-reefed topsail breeze, and the sea also was falling, but the mist and haze continued even after day-break.

The watch on deck kept a keen look out. More sail was set on the "Gazelle," and every attempt was made to discover the brig. By sounding, our hero perceived that they were close to land, but hour after hour passed, and though the sky cleared overhead and the gale moderated to a single-reefed breeze,

the mist still obscured the surface of the waters. Towards mid-day, however, the breeze shifted into the west, and rapidly the mist drifted off the surface of the sea.

The "Wild Gazelle" was then heading to the south west; to the surprise of our hero and his skipper, they found that they were within two miles of a large rocky island, between which and the main land of Corsica there was a wide open channel. All eyes anxiously sought for the "Bella Donna," but no such craft was to be seen in any direction. The long line of the Corsican coast was distinctly visible, stretching away to the north as far as the eye could trace.

Devereux was confounded and agitated. He could perceive a number of vessels out to sea, and several small coasters coming out from a wide gulf to the eastward of them, but the "Bella Donna" was not visible. Old Blowhard stood, glass in hand, examining every nook and corner of the Corsican coast to leeward of them.

"She has gone between this island and the main land, in the mist," said our hero, "probably without being aware of it, and then made for the Straits of Bonafaccio. When we weather this island, we shall no doubt open the channel; it is studded with islands, and the 'Bella Donna' may be hid from our sight by them. Now make sail, I will run through the channel; we may fall in with some vessel, the crew of which may have seen this Polacca brig?"

Before an hour was over the island was weathered, and then they at once perceived how the "Bella Donna" had escaped, for the islands, all scattered over the channel between Corsica and Sardinia were right before them, while numerous small crafts, some at anchor, some working amongst the islands, were plainly visible.

The "Gazelle's" yards were squared before the fine breeze, with a clear blue sky overhead; the weather after the two thunder storms apparently becoming settled. The

strong currents that run between the numerous islands renders the navigation of the Straits, except with a leading wind, extremely difficult.

Having passed the Island of Caprera, now famous as being the residence of Garibaldi, Devereux beheld a large three masted Xebecque stretching in from the southward under full sail.

"Now," said our hero to his skipper. "If the 'Bella Donna' ran through this channel, she must, I should think, have passed very close to this craft working through." Accordingly the "Gazelle" bore down on the Xebecque, and hailed her.

The *padrone* of the lateen rigged vessel threw his foresail aback, taking the yacht for a vessel of war.

Devereux ran close along side, and questioned the *padrone* respecting the Polacca brig, describing her minutely.

"*Si Signor*," returned the skipper, "we spoke that very craft, with a woman's

bust and head over her prow, and a number of men aboard; she was steering for the coast of Sicily, and spoke us, asking where we were from. We said Sicily; the *Capitano* then asked if there were any Neapolitan cruisers between here and Sicily. I said that there were several off the north coast, but that Garibaldi had effected a landing. They gave us three cheers, and crowded all sail for Sicily."

Devereux felt immense relief. The "Bella Donna" was then actually before them; they were on her course, and that was a great thing to know, though she had nearly three hours' start of them. The skipper of the Xebecque was thanked for his information, and the "Wild Gazelle" was soon under a cloud of canvas, steering direct for the coast of Sicily. A little reflection convinced Percy that the skipper of the "Bella Donna" had changed his intentions, and was now steering for Sicily, instead of Civita Vecchia. It was possible, he conjectured, that the Garibaldian

volunteers had insisted on being landed on the coast of Sicily previous to the Signor Barracco being taken to Civita Vecchia.

Every manœuvre was resorted to increase the "Wild Gazelle's" speed. A fine steady breeze blew, and in a direction that permitted all the sails of the schooner to draw. On heaving the log, she was going through the water at the rate of fourteen knots.

"A stern chase is a long chase, Blowhard," said Devereux, to his skipper, who was looking attentively at the wake of the "Wild Gazelle." "She has at least five and twenty miles start of us. I therefore do not expect to overhaul the 'Bella Donna' till close up with the Sicilian coast."

"We have one thing in our favour, sir," replied the old seaman. "The brig will approach the coast cautiously, for fear of running into the jaws of a Neapolitan cruiser."

"True!" returned our hero, "she will most likely slacken sail as she nears the coast."

The breeze continued fair and steady during the night, though with the setting sun it fell to a light breeze. Still the "Gazelle" was sailing full eight knots all through the night. She passed numerous crafts, who gazed with wonder at the graceful schooner, as, under every sail that would draw, she shot by them as if they were at anchor.

Devereux slept but little that night, and relieved the old skipper as soon as the sun rose. The wind had lulled completely with the dawn, and very shortly after a strong south-east wind sprung up; this forced the yacht to take in sail, and as it blew direct against them, they were obliged to continue the rest of the chase working to windward. This our hero considered an advantage, as he felt very confident he could sail two feet for the "Bella Donna's" one, on a taut bow-line.

Shortly after a large steamer appeared in sight, coming up from the south-east. "Most likely," thought our hero, "this vessel passed close enough to observe the 'Bella Donna,'"

so keeping a little away, he crossed her course. Hoisting the English ensign at his peak, the vessel he soon recognised as an English one, and as the yacht backed her topsail, evidently with the intention of speaking the steamer, the latter blew off her steam, and dropped up nearly along side. The steamer was a remarkably handsome boat, called the "Peri," and was from Palermo the Happy. On politely questioning the captain, Devereux had the satisfaction of hearing that they had spoken the "Bella Donna" little better than an hour before. The captain described her accurately; those on board the brig he said were particularly anxious for news from Sicily, and when he told them there was a frigate and an armed Xebecque cruising off the island, they appeared startled. The captain of the "Peri" considered that the "Bella Donna" might be about ten or twelve miles astern, and would, as the wind had veered a point or two into the eastward, make the coast of Sicily before night fall.

Thanking the captain of the steamer, and carrying a press of sail, Devereux sailed on, hoping to reach the island before the "Bella Donna," for the chances of falling in with her whilst tacking was greatly against them, as both might be on opposite tacks and thus not pass within miles of each other. The next day, the lofty mountain peaks of the island of Sicily rose up before them, not fifteen miles distant.

Turning his glass all round the horizon, numerous crafts of all sizes and rig might be seen, steering their different courses, but not one resembling the "Bella Donna." Within three miles Percy Devereux perceived a very large Xebecque, with extremely lofty yards, and a long pennant streaming from the peak of her main lateen yard.

"That xebecque is a Neapolitan cruiser. She is bearing down upon us," observed Devereux. As the xebecque approached, those in the yacht could perceive that it was full of men, and carried four guns a side. It was a very

handsome craft, and considerably larger in tonnage than the "Wild Gazelle." As the yacht's bows were crossed, an officer hailed, desiring them to heave to. But Devereux only run up the English flag, and continued his course for the island. The officer, standing on a gun aboard the xebecque, again hailed, in an angry voice, desiring to know where they were bound to.

Taking a trumpet, for the xebecque, though she attempted to follow, was falling rapidly astern, our hero merely replied, "He was not bound to any particular place; that he was cruising for his pleasure." He then held on till the shores of Sicily became distinctly visible, the xebecque still following, several miles astern.

When within five miles of the shore, and near the harbour of Melita, the schooner was hove to, and again the commander began to inspect every sail in sight; but the Neapolitan xebecque, after an hour, came up with them and lay to within a short distance. A boat

was then launched, and our hero perceived an officer jump into the stern sheets, followed by four of the crew, who speedily pulled up alongside the yacht. Percy felt a great inclination to brace round his fore-yards and give them a long pull, feeling no kind of respect for the Neapolitan flag, and wild and improbable as the attempt of Garibaldi appeared at that time, he most sincerely wished to see the Bourbons driven out of Naples and Sicily.

The officer in the xebecque's boat was a young man, about his own age. Standing up in the stern sheets, he looked up fiercely into our hero's face, saying,

"What is the name of this craft?"

"I deny your right to ask," returned our hero, quietly. "If entering a Neapolitan port, I should, of course, answer all proper inquiries. I am cruising for my own pleasure, and under a flag respected by all nations; therefore, I decline answering any unnecessary questions, especially as they are not made in

a very courteous manner. My country is at peace with the Neapolitan King, and I am on the high seas."

The Neapolitan lieutenant looked savage.

"You are in Neapolitan waters," cried the officer. "The coast of Sicily is threatened by bands of pirates, calling themselves Garibaldi Volunteers. Your vessel is suspected of carrying arms and ammunition, and we have a right to challenge and inspect any craft approaching the shores of Sicily."

"By Jove!" replied our hero, laughing, "it's something new to hear of a party of volunteers invading a kingdom. However, that's no affair of mine. This is my yacht, and in the open sea. I will allow no armed men to board her."

"Take care," returned the Neapolitan. "Coolly as you take it, you will find out your error when too late to remedy it."

"*Patienza!*" returned Percy Devereux, smiling. "You will find me ready to answer you, in any other manner you please. On to

the deck of this yacht no one comes without my permission."

The Lieutenant motioned with his hand to the surprised men at the oars, for Percy spoke Italian well. They could see that the "Wild Gazelle" carried four brass guns, and they also suspected that there might be a large body of men concealed below. As the gig pulled towards the xebecque, Tom Barlow called out from the main cross-trees "that he could make out the Polacca brig; he was sure it was she; he knew her by the new cloth in her fore topsail. He had remarked it when he had first seen her."

Devereux seized his glass and ascended to the cross-trees. He soon sighted the vessel Tom Barlow had stated was the brig. She was coming up before the breeze rapidly, and after a steady survey, he became satisfied that it was the "Bella Donna," for he waited till her hull rose to view, and then her white figure head became discernible through the glass.

As he was preparing to descend, he perceived that the Neapolitan cruiser was standing away in the direction of the brig. Evidently they intended inspecting her. She had lowered her ensign and pennant, and at a moderate distance might easily be taken for a merchant vessel.

"You are quite right, Tom," said our hero, on reaching the deck; "that is the 'Bella Donna.'"

"That ere chap, sir, with the lateen sails is making for her, and will surely board her and take her as a prize, with those volunteers aboard her. I wonder would she fight, sir?"

"She would stand no chance in the world," returned our hero, "of beating her off; but we must stand after the xebecque, for I strongly suspect we shall have something to do in this affair."

Mr. Blowhard coming on deck, Devereux had his four twelve-pounders loaded and prepared. Rescue Camilla, he had resolved to,

at all risks, and he instantly formed his plans, should the Neapolitan xebecque board the "Bella Donna."

Under easy sail the "Gazelle" kept close up with the xebecque, ready to act at the proper moment. The brig soon became distinctly visible, advancing apparently unconcerned, and the captain evidently did not suspect the zebec, and if he recognised the yacht, thought himself too strong for her.

When almost within pistol-shot, the xebecque tacked, and ran up the Neapolitan ensign and pennant. This startled the crew of the "Bella Donna" out of their supposed security, instantly the yards were squared away, her royals hoisted, and sail made, dead before the wind. The xebecque immediately altered its course, followed, and tried one of her bow guns, as a signal and intimation to heave to; but the "Bella Donna" crew commenced hoisting their sails.

The "Gazelle," with her foresail brailed and her top-gallant sail lowered, found she

could keep abreast of the xebecque. This proceeding the captain of the cruiser thought showed a collusion between the two vessels, and very deliberately fired one of his guns right at her, the ball cutting away both back stays.

"Blow me! if that chap ain't saucy," said Tom Barlow, as he and a comrade repaired the damage committed by the eight-pound shot.

"I could cripple him with one of our twelve-pound shots," observed our hero to old Blowhard, who was growling at being shot at without giving any return of the compliment; "but, if possible, I will effect my object without hurting anyone."

The xebecque was rapidly coming up with the "Bella Donna," who, finding that to be the case, opened fire with one of her eight-pounders over the stern, the xebecque returning the shot with one of her bow chasers; but very little damage was done to either vessel.

"Now, mind your helm," cried Devereux

to his skipper, who placed himself at the wheel; "they are going to run the 'Bella Donna" aboard. The moment you see this done, run us alongside on the other board and make fast."

"Aye! aye! sir, I understand; it shall be done."

Our hero, calling Tom Barlow and half-a-dozen of his crew, who had armed themselves with cutlasses, together, told them to follow him; he and Barlow would make for the cabin, whilst the rest were to keep the passage to the schooner, "for depend upon it all hands will be employed beating off the Neapolitan cruiser."

He had hardly finished instructing the sailors, and requesting them, except actually to preserve life, not to strike with the edge of the cutlass, before a loud cheer from the deck of the xebecque, and shouts of rage from the Garibaldian volunteers, announced that the two vessels had engaged. The next instant the "Gazelle" ranged up alongside, and Devereux, followed

by his eager crew, scrambled up the side, and made a rush for the cabin. A scene of indescribable confusion reigned on the decks of the "Bella Donna." Knowing their fate, if captured, and having a fearful apprehension of being thrust into a Neapolitan dungeon and tortured, Colonel Riotti and his volunteers fought furiously, beating back the Neapolitans as they attempted to climb over the high bulwarks of their vessel. So engaged were they, that our hero and Tom Barlow reached the cabin unheeded, and rushing down the stairs, Devereux burst open the door of the main cabin. As he did so, Barracco, standing in the middle of the floor, levelled a brace of pistols at his head. Well might our hero's comrades say he had a charmed life. His cap was knocked off and one ball tore through the collar of his coat, just raising the skin, and, as Tom Barlow followed, the same ball deprived him of his starboard whisker, and caused him, for a moment to fall back; but the next instant Devereux had

disarmed the furious Italian, and, handing him over to the enraged sailor, who was a most powerful man, he proceeded to burst open the door of the cabin where Camilla and her two female attendants had been locked in by the Signor Barracco.

Barracco foamed at the mouth, and struggled so fiercely with Tom Barlow that both rolled over on the floor, breaking the table to pieces; but Tom, smarting under his lost whisker and scorched cheek, grasped the Italian by the throat, with such a grip that Barracco gasped for breath. Just then Devereux passed through the cabin with Camilla and her terrified attendants.

"Oh! for God's sake, Percy," exclaimed the trembling girl, "release my uncle; do not let him be injured."

"He shall be released," whispered our hero, "only pass through the door, and I will lock it."

Camilla, pale and trembling with emotion, still anxious for her uncle, obeyed with a

hesitating step, the shouts, cheers, and repeated musket reports on deck bewildering her; for she could not know how affairs were over her head.

Binding the Signor Barracco's hands with some spun yarn, Tom Barlow left him struggling on a sofa, and hurried after his master.

As Devereux gained the deck, supporting Camilla in his arms, Colonel Riotti and a dozen of the volunteers made a furious rush upon him with their cutlasses in hand, whilst, with shouts of rage and triumph, an officer of the xebecque, followed by a score of the Neapolitans, gained a footing at last upon the deck of the "Bella Donna."

Seeing the perilous state of affairs on the deck of the brig, old Blowhard and the entire crew of the schooner scrambled on to the deck, making a dash at their enemies, cheering and using the flat of their cutlasses with might and considerable effect. Before this, Devereux and Colonel Riotti met face to face,

the former making a desperate cut at our hero's head. Leaving Tom Barlow and the skipper to get the females into the yacht, Devereux knocked up the Colonel's cutlass, and dealt him so hard a blow on the side of the head with the flat of his heavy weapon, that he rolled over senseless to leeward; before he could, however, gain the schooner the Neapolitan lieutenant, who had recognised him, called out,

"Ah! cowardly robber, you won't escape me!"

Devereux saw that he had scarcely a moment to lose, his men had got the Lady Camilla and one of the females to the yacht, and had already freed her from the brig, thinking their commander was going to spring aboard; her topsail was braced round, and a fresh breeze was paying her off from the brig, when Percy arrested himself in the act of leaping, and turned, hearing the words of the Neapolitan officer; even Tom Barlow had sprung aboard, carrying one of the terrified

female attendants with him. The Neapolitan officer rushed at Devereux, with three or four of his men, who hastened to secure their prize; but they made a fatal mistake, for Percy, enraged, and seeing he could no longer leap aboard his yacht, met the Neapolitan officer, and striking him a fearful blow, cut through his cap, and dashed him bleeding and senseless upon the deck. Just then Barracco, having freed himself, rushed upon deck, and seeing the Neapolitan officer struck down, shouted out, "a thousand crowns for this robber, dead or alive!" A blow of our hero's heavy cutlass felled another Neapolitan to the deck,and the next instant he sprang over the bulwarks, Amid shouts, shots, and various imprecations, and the cheers of his own excited crew, he swam gallantly along side the yacht, and in a moment more stood unharmed upon her deck.

CHAPTER XIV.

The commander of the Neapolitan cruiser, perfectly satisfied that the "Gazelle" was a confederate of the "Bella Donna," hearing how his lieutenant had been cut down and severely wounded, and secure of the brig as a prize, at once cast off, and ranging ahead, without a moment's hesitation opened fire upon the schooner as she was bracing round her topsails, and broke the peak of her mainsail, which she had previously lowered.

"This will never do!" exclaimed Percy, seeing part of his bulwarks carried away, and two of his men wounded by the shot from the

xebecque. "Bring over the two guns, and let us cripple him."

Getting the schooner in hand, and the guns brought to the side and double shotted, after another broadside from the xebecque, which splintered their main boom, and wounded old Blowhard and Devereux slightly, the guns were fired, and with a cheer of triumph, the crew of the schooner beheld the mainmast of their opponents, with its ponderous yard, go right over the side, crashing and tearing away the most part of the starboard bulwarks, and covering the crew with the folds of the enormous sail.

The xebecque lay perfectly disabled, whilst the "Gazelle," squaring her fore top-sail, bore away on her intended course for Malta.

Those on board the "Bella Donna" no sooner beheld the disabled condition of the Neapolitan cruiser, than they overpowered the few Neapolitan sailors left, and making all the sail they could, bore up for the Italian

shore, abandoning their intention, as Colonel Riotti was severely hurt, of attempting a landing on the Sicilian coast.

Whilst this short contest was taking place between the three vessels, a large ship, under a cloud of sail, was standing out from the Sicilian shore, and without being observed, was approaching the scene of contention. Even on board the "Gazelle" she was not noticed, for Devereux was changing his soaked garments, and binding a bandage over the long splinter wound in his left shoulder. The old skipper had also bound up his wound in the side, which luckily was slight, and was attending to the two wounded men, who had been carried below. The rest of the crew were strengthening the boom where it had been wounded by a round shot, by lashing slight spars along the splintered part. The rigging was also cut in several places, and the planks of the bulwarks were knocked to pieces. Camilla Barracco was sitting on the sofa in the yacht's cabin, with her two terrified

attendants. The young Countess was pale as death, and was also greatly agitated. She could not and did not regret her rescue by her lover, but she could not have imagined that such a scene as she had witnessed could have taken place. She had, however, become aware, whilst in the "Bella Donna," that she was likely to become an object of interest and speculation to Colonel Riotti, for the Colonel, with very little ceremony, told her guardian that the brig would first proceed to the coast of Sicily, to land him and his followers. Barracco, though enraged, perceived he was in the Colonel's power, and the skipper of the "Bella Donna," with his crew of eight men, were also powerless against the adventurers attached to the fortunes of the colonel. Riotti very deliberately told the Count that he fancied his niece for a wife, and he thought she would make a much better wife than a nun.

The Italian, caught in a trap, was speechless with the contending passions that agitated

him. That a penniless adventurer like Riotti should dare to make the descendant of a noble house, such an offer was an insult insupportable. In his first fury he struck the colonel in the face, and had not the skipper and the terrified Camilla interfered, one would have killed the other. Camilla thus became acquainted with Riotti's designs, for he openly avowed he would take her with him when they made the coast of Sicily, and could land.

Such was the position of affairs, when they sighted the Sicilian coast, and afterwards, when they mistook the xebecque for a merchant craft, they braced round and fled, Barracco regained courage. The best thing that could happen for him was the capture of the "Bella Donna." Colonel Riotti was cowed; still, after a moment's reflection, he resolved to resist the attempt of the cruiser to board. The dungeons of Naples appalled him and his followers.

The sight, however, of the "Wild

Gazelle" astounded both Riotti and Barracco. The latter vowed that Devereux should never carry off his niece ; and Riotti vowed to exterminate him if he attempted it.

Camilla, however, was rescued from both guardian and adventurer. Carried on board the "Gazelle," she was left in the cabin with her two attendants, in a state of mind not easily described. She trembled lest, in the heat of temper, her lover might injure her guardian, or be himself wounded. She could feel no real affection for her uncle, but she felt acutely when she thought what the world might say. Yet, were she not rescued, she would assuredly have fallen a victim to the schemes of Colonel Riotti.

When Devereux had changed his garments, he hastened into the cabin, to reassure Camilla respecting the situation of her uncle, and to satisfy her scruples, by stating that no single life had been sacrificed in rescuing her. Camilla was exceedingly pale, but as her lover entered the cabin, the sense of her

strange situation brought the blood for a moment back to her cheeks. Nevertheless, she held out her hand, with a sweet, affectionate, grateful smile, to him who had staked his life to preserve her from a fate she shuddered to think of. The two female attendants very discreetly retired into an inner cabin.

"This has been a terrible day, dear Percy," said the maiden, "but I trust in God that my uncle is unhurt, and that none of your people have been wounded."

"There was not a hair of your guardian's head injured, dearest," said our hero, sitting down beside his beloved, taking her hand and kissing it affectionately. Even that slight token of his love was done so respectfully and so tenderly, that no maiden need have felt offended; knowing the peculiarity of Camilla's situation, and her natural timidity and delicacy of thought and feelings, he was most careful in his manner.

After explaining to her how the affair ended

on board the "Bella Donna," he stated that it was his intention to steer for Malta, and there to place her under the protection of a lady whose husband was an old comrade and a most dear friend. "There you will receive every attention and kindness, till this," and he again gently kissed the hand he held, "becomes mine; we will then return to Genoa."

Much more was said between the lovers, but lovers' thoughts, disclosed to each other, are sacred. When Devereux quitted the cabin to ascend upon deck, he left his fair and beautiful prize much more tranquil and hopeful, and less alarmed at her strange situation. Before he reached the deck, the loud boom of a heavy gun, at no great distance, caught his ear, and he hastened his steps.

On reaching the deck, his skipper, handing him the glass, said, "I think this ship, overhauling us, is a Neapolitan frigate."

Taking the glass, our hero fixed it upon

the vessel, under a crowd of canvas, following in their wake.

"Yes," said he, "she's a Neapolitan sailing frigate. We must baffle her. I was afraid it was the "Veloce" screw frigate. She is very fast. Now this vessel, if we can coax her on a wind, in such a breeze as this can beat her. I shall suddenly heave to, as she nears us, and before she can take in sail, she will run a long way past us. The moment she does, brace round and get on a taut bowline. This we will continue to do till night, and then alter our course."

"If she does not cripple us with a shot, sir, we shall escape her."

"Ah! we must run that chance; it won't do to be taken to Naples to explain matters."

On came the Neapolitan frigate, under studding sails, low and aloft. Suddenly the "Gazelle" was run up in the wind, and hove to as if in submission. The frigate shot past, and then began lowering away, as she prepared to round to also. But the yacht

had already braced her topsails on a wind, and with the fresh breeze was gliding through the water before the frigate perceived her manœuvre. As soon as she could get upon a wind and reduce her canvass, her bow chasers were brought to bear upon the flying "Gazelle," but they struck wide of the mark, and the frigate settled herself for a chase, being quite confident of overhauling her puny antagonist, and blowing her out of the water. But to their intense disgust, after half-an-hour, they plainly perceived that the "Gazelle" increased her distance, and was leaving them fast.

The "Gazelle," under her immense spread of canvas, appeared to fly through the water, her mainsail almost lying on the surface, and sweeping the crests of the light waves.

"*Cento diavolo!*" exclaimed the commander of the frigate, as he paced the deck, with an angry frown on his brow, "how is this?—we do not gain upon this *maledetta golleta!*"

The night became very dark; with an increased breeze, and then the "Gazelle's" course was altered, the sheets slacked, and they shaped for Malta.

As the dawn made, our hero, who had snatched a couple of hours' rest in the steward's berth, returned to the deck. The island of Malta was visible through a thin, grey mist, which lay upon the surface of the deep. The breeze having died away, above this mist was seen the tall spars of a large ship between them and the island; but as the light increased, and the surrounding scene became distinctly visible, Devereux, who had his glass fixed upon the spot where he expected each moment to see the hull of the ship that owned the tall masts, exclaimed, in a tone of vexation,

"The Neapolitan frigate, by Jupiter!"

Old Blowhard rubbed his eyes, and uttered an exclamation not exactly mentionable.

"How is it possible, sir?"

The fact was that Captain Manfrede, of the

Neapolitan frigate, felt exceedingly chagrined at not only being out-manœuvred but outsailed.

"This is too bad," said he, to his first lieutenant, "that filibuster must have been an English yacht. She was, when we first chased her, shaping a course for Malta. Now, ten to one, when it becomes dark, she alters her course, and will again make for Malta. We can beat her before the wind easily. So the moment we lose sight of her, square away, and make all sail, and we will be off to the Island of Malta."

The Neapolitan commander was right—he reached the island first, and was lying to when first perceived by those on board the "Wild Gazelle."

CHAPTER XV.

At the time Percy Devereux made out the Neapolitan frigate, she was about three miles off. There was not a breath of air, the water like a mirror of glass, and the sky overhead without a speck to sully its brilliant purity.

"This is annoyingly awkward, Blowhard," said our hero. "They will put out their boats."

"Blow me if they are not doing so!" exclaimed the skipper.

It was true enough. Two boats were lowered over the side of the Neapolitan frigate, and as Devereux regarded them with his glass, he perceived that they were filled

with men, and immediately began pulling towards the "Gazelle."

Devereux thought for a moment—looked carefully all round the horizon, and then said,

"Come, by Jove! I must lead them another dance after us. That long black line to eastward of us; tells of a Levanter coming up, which will reach us nearly as soon as the boats. Now, let all the men come on deck armed with pistol and cutlass; and run out our twelve pounders. I don't mean to hurt a man; but I am quite satisfied the Neapolitans will not attempt to board us from their boats, though they doubtless mistake us for a filibustering craft."

All this was done in a few minutes, and seventeen hands, including all the males aboard, made a good show, with the muzzles of two twelve pounders protruding from the side.

The boats came rapidly up, and so did the

dark line to the eastward. When the boats were within a very short distance, Devereux hailed, and hoisting the English ensign, said,

"If more than one boat comes alongside, we shall open fire upon you. This is an English yacht."

This intimation instantly checked the speed of the boats. One was a gig, with an officer in the stern sheets, four men pulling and four armed men in her besides. The other was a ship's boat, carrying half-a-dozen marines with muskets, and half-a-dozen sailors pulling; a marine officer sitting in the stern.

The two boats paused. The officer in the gig spoke with the officer in the boat, and the gig pulled up within a few yards of the "Gazelle," and then lay upon their oars. The officer in her, standing up, hailed the schooner.

"What's the name of this schooner?"

"The 'Wild Gazelle,'" returned Devereux,

and then added, "if you will come alone on board, I will easily undeceive you as to her character. She is simply a yacht.

"I am not going to be made a fool of," returned the Neapolitan officer, fiercely. "Yachts do not generally fire into vessels and dismast them. My orders are to take you in tow, and bring you alongside the Neapolitan frigate, the 'Ferdinando.' If you offer resistance, you must take the consequences. I will do my duty."

As he said the words, a strong puff of wind from the east bent the schooner gracefully towards the Neapolitan boats. Already the sails were prepared for receiving the easterly wind, and instantly she gathered way. A fine fresh breeze was curling and cresting the ripples with their tiny crests of foam.

The Neapolitan officer cried out in a rage, waving his hat to the boat full of marines to come up.

"If you don't heave to, we'll fire into you."

On dashed the "Gazelle" under her immense canvas, and bang went the muskets of the enraged Neapolitans, whilst an amusing attempt was made to pursue in the boats.

A cheer was given by the yacht's crew as they beheld the discomfitted Neapolitans give up the chase, and pull back towards the frigate.

"Now, skipper, you see we shall baffle the frigate; for with this breeze, I shall have a great advantage, and be able to double yonder head before the crew can possibly get us within range of her guns, and into Valetta she will not follow us, of course."

As soon as the frigate had picked up her boats and the breeze reached her, she made sail after the "Wild Gazelle;" but it was too late. The yacht weathered the head, the frigate firing her bow guns at the saucy schooner, without effect. Half-an-hour more, and the "Gazelle" rounded Battery Point and ran into Valetta Harbour.

Camilla had heard the firing and the cheering of the "Gazelle's" crew, and feeling some

degree of alarm, threw her mantle over her, and with her attendant, tried to gain a view out from the companion stairs. The yacht was then rounding Battery Point, and she could just see into the little harbour they were entering. Devereux, seeing her, hastened to her, and in a few words explained, and relieved her mind of all alarm.

When the "Gazelle" anchored, Percy hastened ashore, and proceeded at once to the house of Mrs. Vansitart, with whom he was exceedingly intimate, her husband being one of his oldest and most valued friends. In going out, Percy had spent some weeks at Malta, and most of his time was passed at Captain Vansitart's, whose ship was then at Malta.

The Captain's lady received our hero most cordially, and so did her sisters, for he was a general favourite.

"Where in the world have you come from, Captain Devereux?" asked the lady, after a cordial greeting. "You are here, and there,

and everywhere in that 'Wild Gazelle' of yours. Any new adventures since we saw you?"

"My dear madam," replied Devereux, with a smile, "my adventures are now over, for I have got a wife."

"A wife!" repeated all the ladies in a breath, "What! married? Is the lady a Circassian princess, a Turkish sultana, or an Arabian of the Desert?"

"Luckily neither one nor the other," answered the young man, laughing. "I promised to present a fair lady to you when next we should meet; but the wife I hope to have is simply an Italian maiden."

"Oh! then you are not married?"

"No; but I have all the preliminaries necessary for that happy state—the fair lady and her consent."

He then related his adventures in full, requesting in return a kind reception of the young Countess, his intended bride, from Mrs. Vansitart.

Mrs. Vansitart and her sisters, with delighted cordiality, expressed their readiness to receive their fair guest, and the carriage was ordered to convey her to their residence, Mrs. Vansitart and one of her sisters going for her.

A very few days made Camilla perfectly at ease in the hospitable home of the Vansitart family. Her grace and beauty soon created a deep interest in her favour. Scarcely ten days had passed before Captain Vansitart, with his frigate, arrived in Malta. He was delighted to see his old comrade.

"I knew you were here, Percy," said the Captain. "You have kicked up a pretty row, at all events. I could make nothing of the story myself. All I could understand was that you it was, and your yacht, the 'Gazelle,' that did the mischief; but, now, in the name of fate, what is it all about?"

"First tell me what you did hear, and I will explain afterwards," answered our hero, laughing.

"I was in Palermo, now the unhappy, just preparing to sail for Malta, when a Neapolitan xebecque, with loss of mainmast, came in, several of her crew killed and wounded. I was in a *café* that evening and heard several officers and men talking vehemently about some desperate engagement with a piratical schooner and a Polacca brig, full of fillibusters. Some words, and a description of the piratical schooner, whose figure-head was accurately described, excited my attention. I joined in the conversation, and received from a Neapolitan naval officer the following account.

"He stated that he was commander of the 'Stromboli' Neapolitan cruiser, xebecque-rigged; that they had chased a fast Polacca brig, full of fillibusters, going to attempt a landing on the coast of Sicily; that after a desperate engagement with more than a hundred Garibaldians, they succeeded in driving them below, and taking possession of the 'Bella Donna'—so the brig was called—

when a piratical schooner, armed with twelve pounders, and full of men, ran up alongside, and boarded the 'Bella Donna' to aid the fillibusters, or Garibaldi Volunteers, and after a furious struggle they beat her off; but some of the piratical crew forced in the cabin, shot an Italian signor, who resisted, and carried off his wife, knocking his first lieutenant over, and nearly braining him with an axe; that the xebecque pursued the pirate, but an unlucky twelve-pound shot carried away their mainmast, and the schooner got off, but was pursued instantly by a Neapolitan frigate, and no doubt was by this time sunk.'

"'What was the schooner like?' I questioned, rather astounded at this strange, incomprehensible story.

"'She was a long, low craft, with taunt, very taunt, raking spars, and had for a figure-head the head and neck of some wild animal, like a deer.'

"'Jupiter Ammon!' cried I; 'it cannot be the "Wild Gazelle?"'

"'*Ah! Santo Madonna! Signor Capitana,*' exclaimed the Neapolitan Commander, 'that's the name; I remember now. The men of the "Bella Donna" said she was called the "Gazelle;" but even that rascal made off seeing us dismasted.'

"I made no further remark, but, by Jove! I was confounded. I felt satisfied the schooner was your yacht; but what the deuce could tempt you to attack a Neapolitan cruiser, board a brig, and carry off a gentleman's wife, amazed me."

Percy burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter. They were then standing on the deck of the "L——" Frigate, and Captain Vansitart knew nothing of our hero's adventures.

"Well, by Jove! Vansitart, this is a story with a vengeance." Our hero then gave a brief account of the contest between him and the Neapolitan xebecque, and the carrying off of Camilla.

The Captain enjoyed the tale amazingly.

"All you have to do now, Percy, is to make your beautiful prize a heretic and get spliced, and you will be all right. So, come along ashore. I am anxious to see this fair captive of yours."

A fortnight after this our hero received the hand of his beautiful prize, and the rejoicings, balls, and *fetes* that took place are still the talk of the gay inhabitants of Malta.

Camilla had publicly renounced the Roman Catholic faith previous to her marriage, and, established in a house of her own, hired for three months, was as happy as a tenderly-loved bride could be.

A month after she had attained her eighteenth year, the "Gazelle" and the "L——" frigate sailed in company for Genoa.

The joy of the Countess de Castiglioni and the two children on again seeing Camilla was great indeed, added to by the success of her project in rendering two persons to whom she was so tenderly attached supremely happy. The bride and bridegroom promised to stay a

few months at Sester; at the end of that period the Countess was to accompany them in their yacht to England, and remain several years amongst her own connections, to educate her children.

Camilla's first anxious question was,

"Had any tidings been received of her Uncle Barracco?"

"Oh! you will be astonished," returned the Countess, "when I tell you that the Signor Barracco was at first thought mortally wounded."

"What!" exclaimed Camilla, in great and anxious amazement. "Mortally wounded! By whom?"

"He never received the slightest hurt. I left him in the cabin of the 'Bella Donna,'" said Percy, "uninjured."

"Then you have not heard," said the Countess, "what followed after you carried off your fair bride. It was rumoured here in Genoa, that the 'Wild Gazelle' boarded the 'Bella Donna,' carried off the Signora Bar-

racco, and afterwards dismasted and nearly sunk a Neapolitan war xebecque, and that afterwards a Neapolitan frigate pursued the schooner, and, with a single broadside, sunk her, and that every soul on board perished."

"Capital! by St. Peter!" said Captain Devereux; "capital ending. All the *dramatis personæ* disposed of, as far as the schooner was concerned. Now for the 'Bella Donna?'"

"Ah! you may laugh now; but till this rumour was contradicted by the arrival of an English brig from Malta, whose Captain positively swore to seeing the 'Gazelle' fired into by a frigate without any damage, and afterwards run into Malta, we almost believed it. I know I suffered great uneasiness. However the Signor Servili's arrival from Rome cleared up the mystery. He related to me what I will now tell you. The 'Bella Donna,' after escaping from the Neapolitan cruiser, made for Civita Vecchia, by the Signor Barracco's orders; but Colonel Riotti swore fiercely that he and his men should be landed

on the coast of Italy first. The skipper of the brig, however, being sadly frightened, seconded the Signor Barracco's desires, for several of the volunteers were wounded and three dead. Hot words ensued. Both violent and furious men in their passions, they drew their weapons, and when the captain of the brigantine, hearing the noise of the contention, rushed into the cabin, both combatants lay prostrate on the floor. Colonel Riotti rolled over on his back, gasped out, 'Rascal, get me water. It was a fair fight.' The next moment he was dead. The Signor Barracco was, at first, considered dead also; but he slowly recovered, and when the brigantine made the port of Civita Vecchia, was carried on shore. The unfortunate adventurer, Riotti, was consigned to the deep before they reached the port; the volunteers dispersed, and thus ended this disastrous expedition of Colonel Riotti.

"The Signor Barracco, on recovering, proceeded to Rome, and his conscience, I suppose,

convincing him he was wrong, the Signor Servili was sent to Genoa with orders to restore all papers, deeds, &c., to the Countess, so as to enable her to gain complete possession of her inheritance. Thus, after all, my dear Percy, 'All's well that ends well.' "

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That venerable colour, and bring back
The glossy ringlets of her early day;
When curling tresses, jetty, thick, and long,
Soon proved her foes were weak, and *Rowland* strong.

The SKIN!—why, old Alfonso would declare
That alabaster by its side might blush—
Shamed out of whiteness!—did there not a rare
And rich Castillian tide of pure blood rush
Beneath to tinge it; but (which was not fair,)
To this the envious sneer'd 'pshaw,' and 'tush;'
And so she sent for ROWLAND'S KALYDOR,
Which proved her lily-whiteness more and more.

Her TEETH!—some scorners said she had a grin, full
With Æthiop specks;—but reader, by your leave,
If you'd have seen them, you'd have deem'd it sinful,
That she should ever laugh within her sleeve;
You couldn't pick a dot out with a pin.—Full
Well this row of pearls you will believe
She owed to ROWLAND:—sceptic, if you wont, O!
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